KAMIGAMI NO ITADAKI

1

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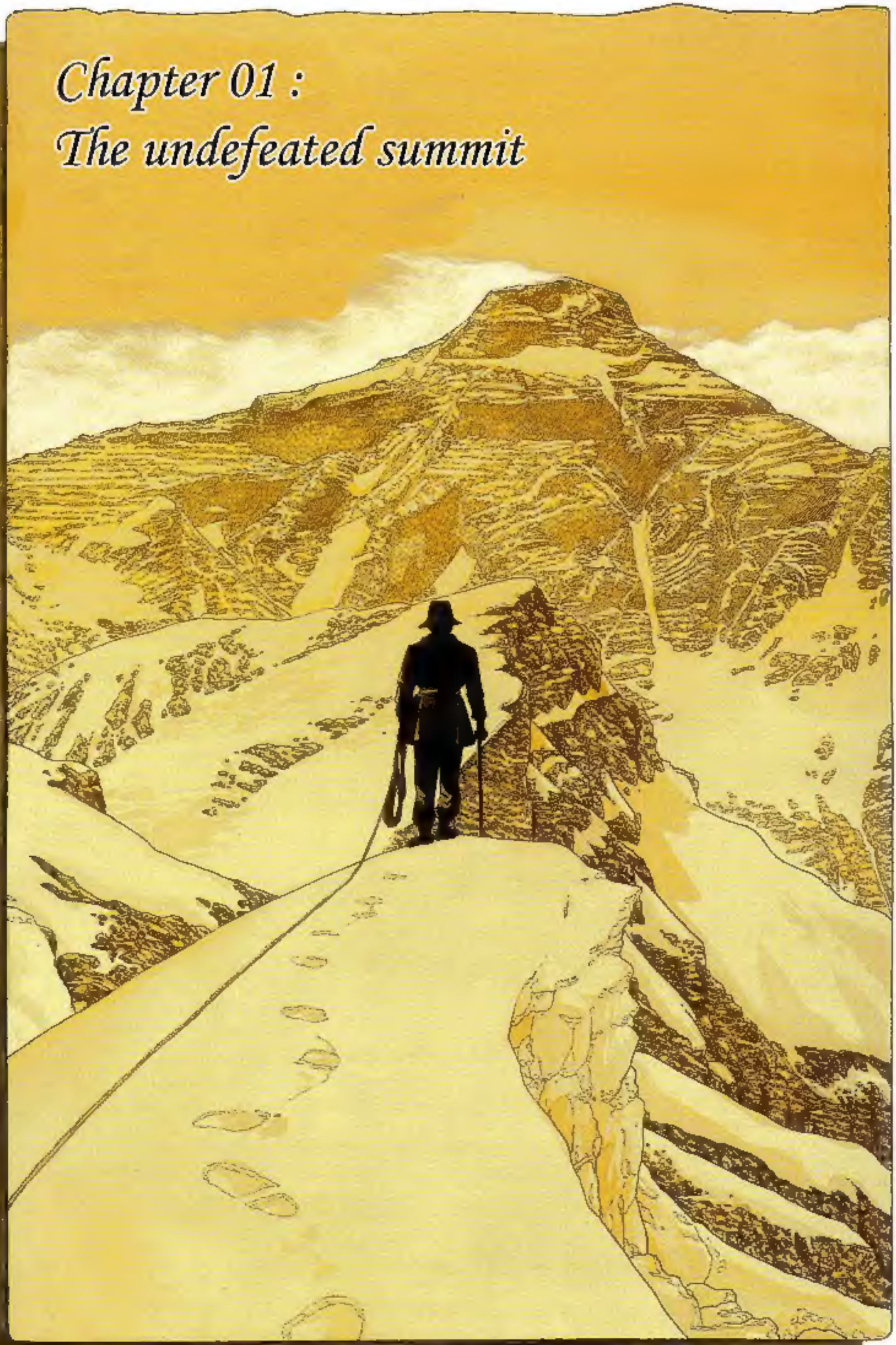
1

Summary :

Chapter 01 :	The undefeated summit	03
Chapter 02 :	The town of all the dreams	35
Chapter 03 :	The starving wolf	103
Chapter 04 :	Oni-sura	167
Chapter 05 :	First ascension	189
Chapter 06 :	A wild independent guy	211
Chapter 07 :	The wind of the summits	255
Chapter 08 :	Solitary ascension	277

Chapter 01 :
The undefeated summit



KAMIGAMI NO ITADAKI

VOLUME 01

PWSSHH

PWSSHH

STAK

PWUSH
PWUSH
PWUSH
8 JUNE 1924
12:30
AT 8260
METERS.
Fwuuuushh

THE SAME DAY 12:50 AT 7900 METERS.

SCRAP

HAA

HAA

HAA

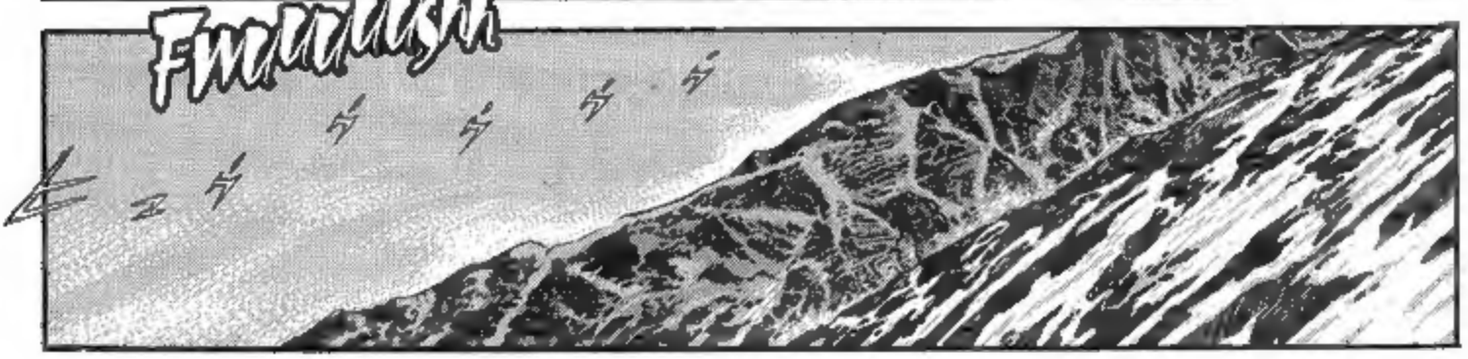
IS THIS ...

A FOSSIL OF TRILOBITE!

YES!

IT'S AMAZING !
WHAT A DISCOVERY ...
IT'S THE FIRST FOSSIL EVER FOUND SO HIGH!

IT'S BEAUTIFUL ...


Fwuuuuuh

IT SEEMS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE ...
BUT THIS PLACE WAS COVERED BY THE SEA MANY YEARS AGO...

WHAT STRENGTH, WHAT PHENOMENAL POWER COULD HAVE BROUGHT THE SEA AT THIS ALTITUDE ?
WHO CAN REASONABLY IMAGINE HOW MANY YEARS IT TOOK ?

PFYUU

THREE MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE THEY LEFT LIVERPOOL, ON FEBRUARY 29TH

THE FOG IS GETTING THICKER ...
BUT THE SKY SEEMS TO BE MORE CLEAR ABOVE THIS HILLSIDE

THEY SHOULD NOT BE FAR FROM THE TOP.

Fwuuuuh!!
IF THE WIND REMAINS AND THE SKY REMAINS CLEAR OVER THE LINE OF CREST, THE CONDITIONS ARE NOT BAD
IF, AS EXPECTED, MALLORY AND IRVINE LEFT THE CAMP NUMBER 6 EARLY THIS MORNING ...

BY MOMENTS, THE BEAMS OF THE SUN LEAK OUT THROUGH CLOUDS

HE DIDN'T HAVE THE LUCK TO SET OUT TO CONQUER THE HIGHEST SUMMIT OF THE WORLD BUT, AS CONSOLATION, HE WAS THE FIRST ONE TO BE ABLE TO STUDY THIS STILL UNEXPLORED ZONE.

NOEL ODELL HAD TAKEN PART IN THIS EXPEDITION AS A GEOLOGIST

TAC

TAC

ODELL PURSUED HIS RESEARCH ENTHUSIASTICALLY

OH!

AMAZING

WHAT A SPLENDID AMMONITE!

AHA

AHA

FINALLY

I'M ACCLIMATISED TO THE HEIGHT EVEN BETTER THAN I THOUGHT

DAMN!

I'M OUT OF BREATH BUT I FEEL THAT I STILL HAVE ALL MY STRENGTH

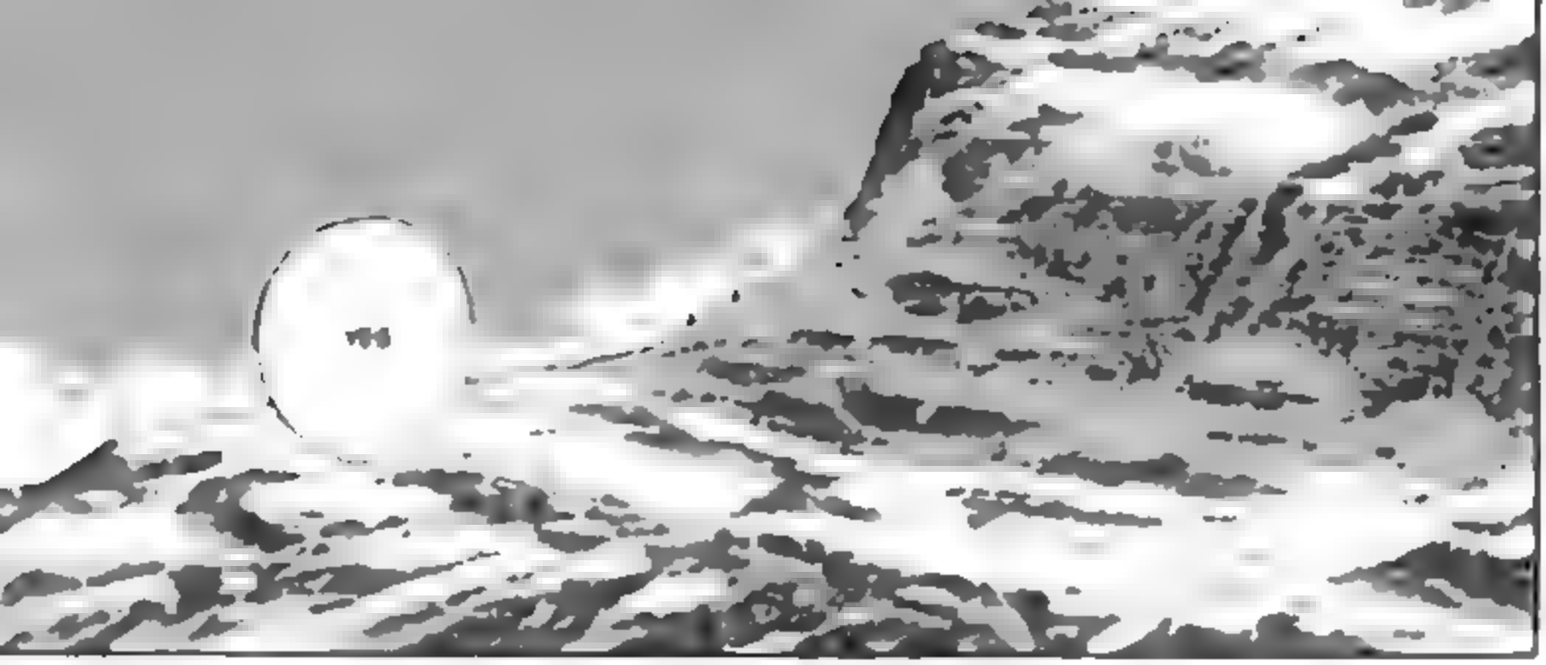
AHA

AHA

SUDDENLY, ODELL FELT AN ARDENT SENSATION
OVERWHELMING
OPPRESSIVE
HAA
HAA
AN INDEFINABLE EMOTION
HAA
HAA
DAMN IT ...
I, TOO, WOULD HAVE LIKED WALKING ON THE SUMMIT OF EVEREST, THE ROOF OF THE WORLD
IF ONLY MALLORY HAD CHOSEN ME AS COMPANION INSTEAD OF IRVINE
HAA
HAA

NEVERTHELESS, IT'S NOT ME WHO WAS CHOSEN
HE PREFERRED TO LEAVE WITH IRVINE BECAUSE OF HIS SKILLS FOR THE MECHANICS WHICH ALLOW HIM TO REPAIR OXYGEN DEVICES.
MM
MM
MM
MM
MY PHYSICAL CONDITION IS EXCELLENT AND I'M ACCLIMATISED TO THE HEIGHT MUCH BETTER THAN IRVINE
MALLORY KNOWS THAT.
Fwaaash!!!
CLOUDS TORE SUDDENLY TO LET PLACE AT A BLUE AND CLEAR SKY
AT THIS MOMENT
MM

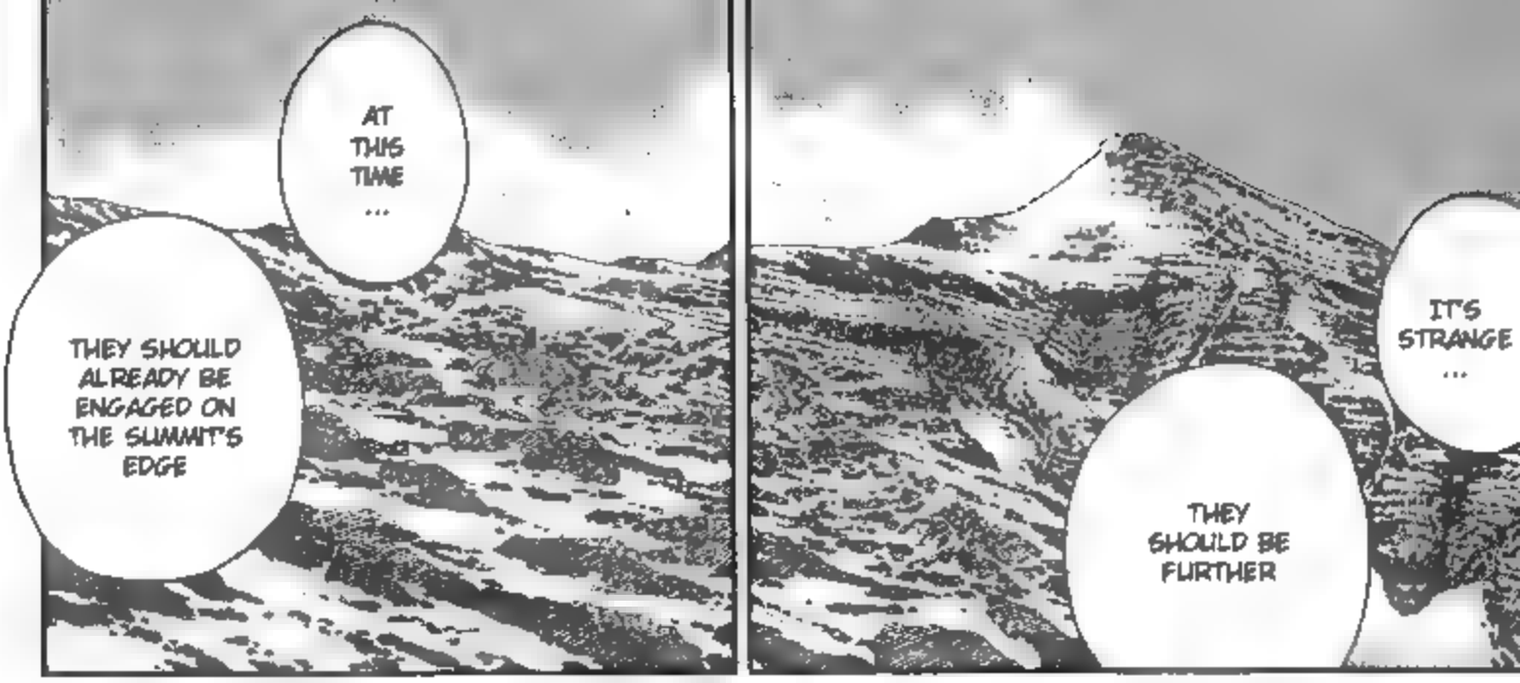
THIS SUDDEN BRIGHT PEAK WAS IN A MIRACLE
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT!
IT'S WONDERFUL!
THE VIEW WHICH JOEL HAD DREAMED HAD TO WAIT AND FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE
AH


YES

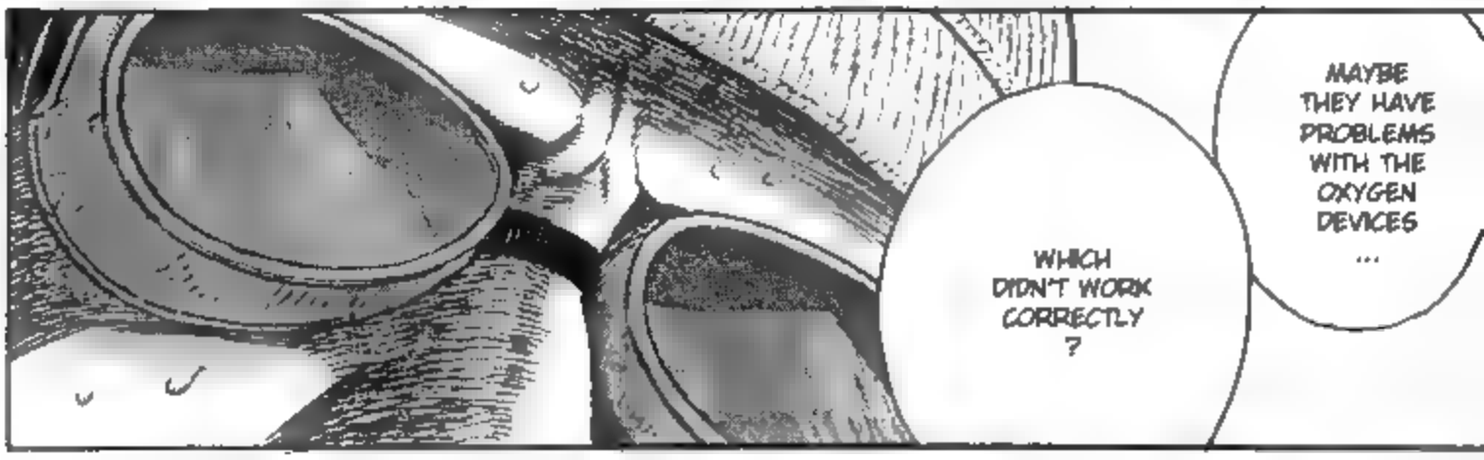
IT'S REALLY VALLEY

WOULD THEIR PROGESSION NOT HAVE TAKEN SOME DELAY ?

NO WAND
IT HAS TO BE IRVING


AT THIS TIME ...
THEY SHOULD ALREADY BE ENGAGED ON THE SUMMIT'S EDGE
IT'S STRANGE ...
THEY SHOULD BE FURTHER

WHAT HAPPENED ?
COULD THEY HAVE MET A PROBLEM WHICH WOULD HAVE DELAYED THEIR DEPARTURE ?

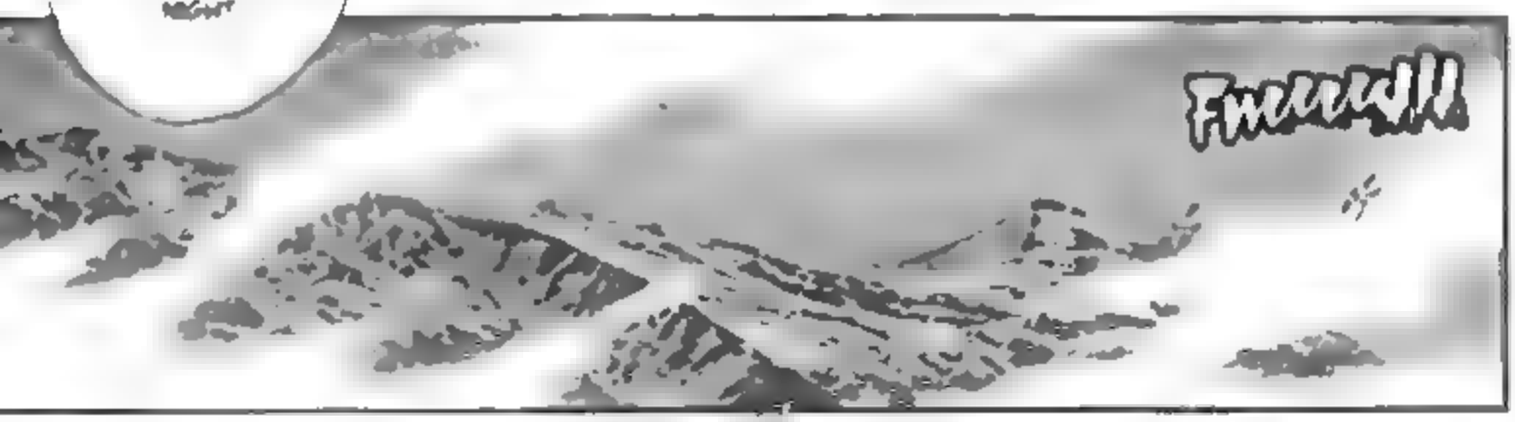

MAYBE THEY HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE OXYGEN DEVICES ...
WHICH DIDN'T WORK CORRECTLY ?

WHAT-EVER ...
THEY'RE REALLY LATE.

UNLESS THEY ...
MET A DIFFICULT PASSAGE ON THE ROAD WHICH WOULD HAVE MADE THEM TO WASTE TIME ?

THEY STILL HAVE SOME TIME LEFT, BUT
JUST ENOUGH TO REACH THE SUMMIT

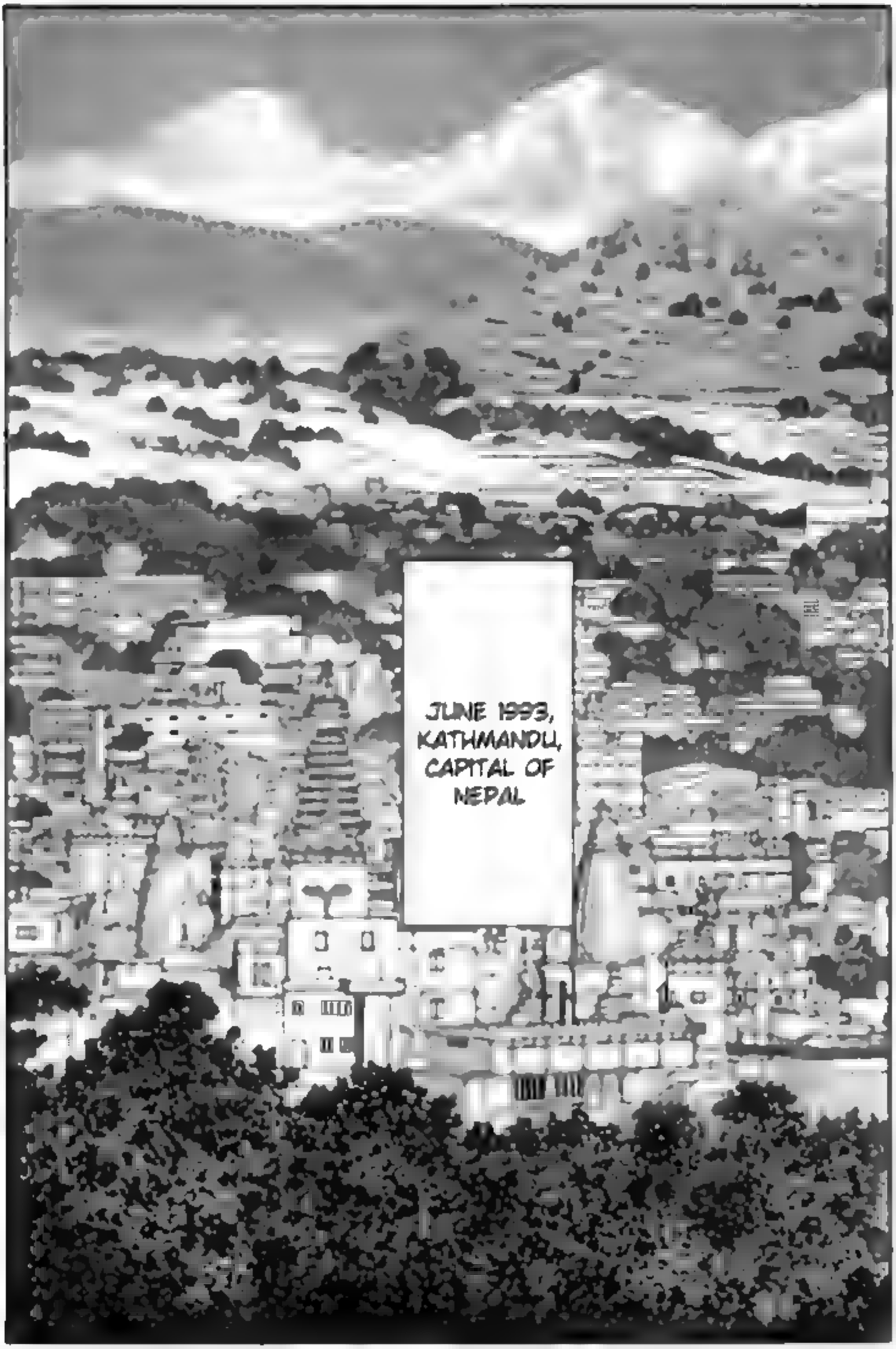
AND TO COME BACK TO CAMP NUMBER 6 BEFORE THE NIGHT


FWUUUUSH!!

AH...

AH...

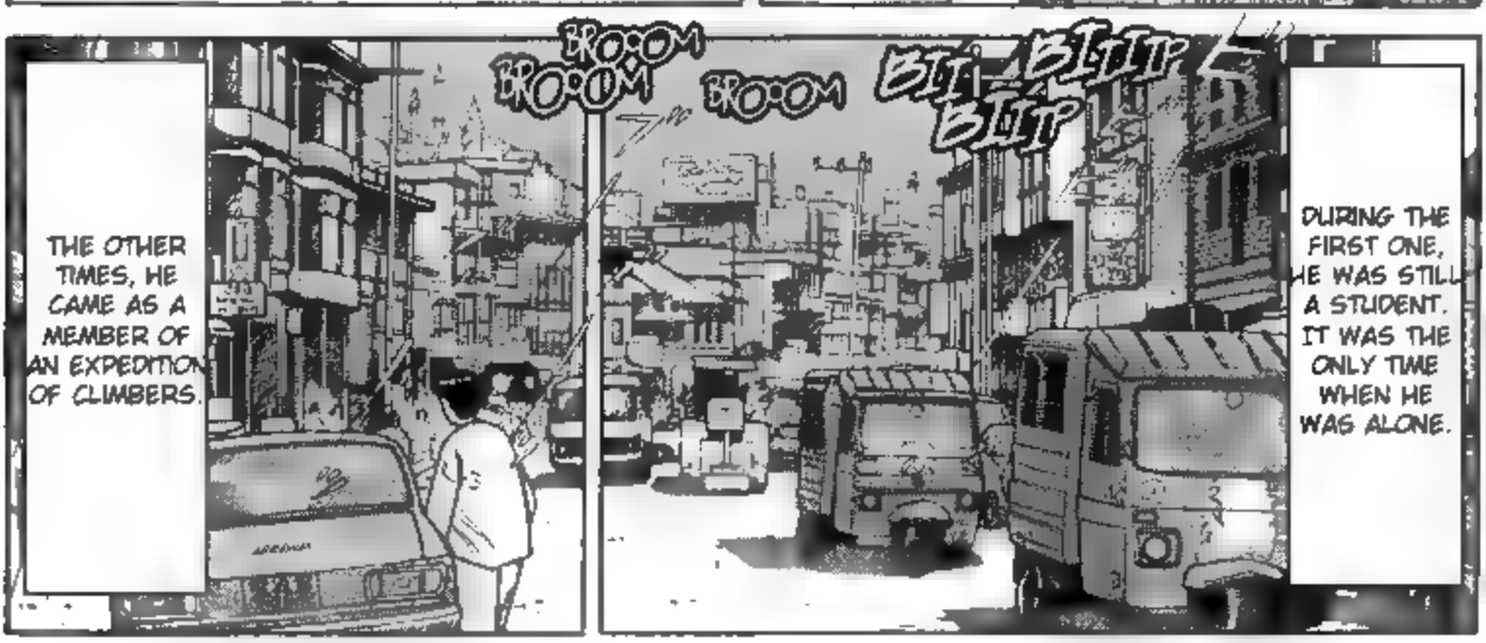
CLOUDS CLOSED THE SCENE AND IT WAS THE LAST TIME WHEN NOEL SAW BOTH SILHOUETTES
JUNE 8TH 1924, MALLORY AND IRVINE DISAPPEARED AND LEFT BEHIND THEM THE MYSTERY OF THE FIRST ASCENT OF EVEREST.


JUNE 1993,
KATHMANDU,
CAPITAL OF
NEPAL

A MYSTERIOUS AND LABYRINTH LIKE CITY
CHEAP CARPETS! CHEAP!

IT WAS HIS FOURTH STAY IN KATHMANDU

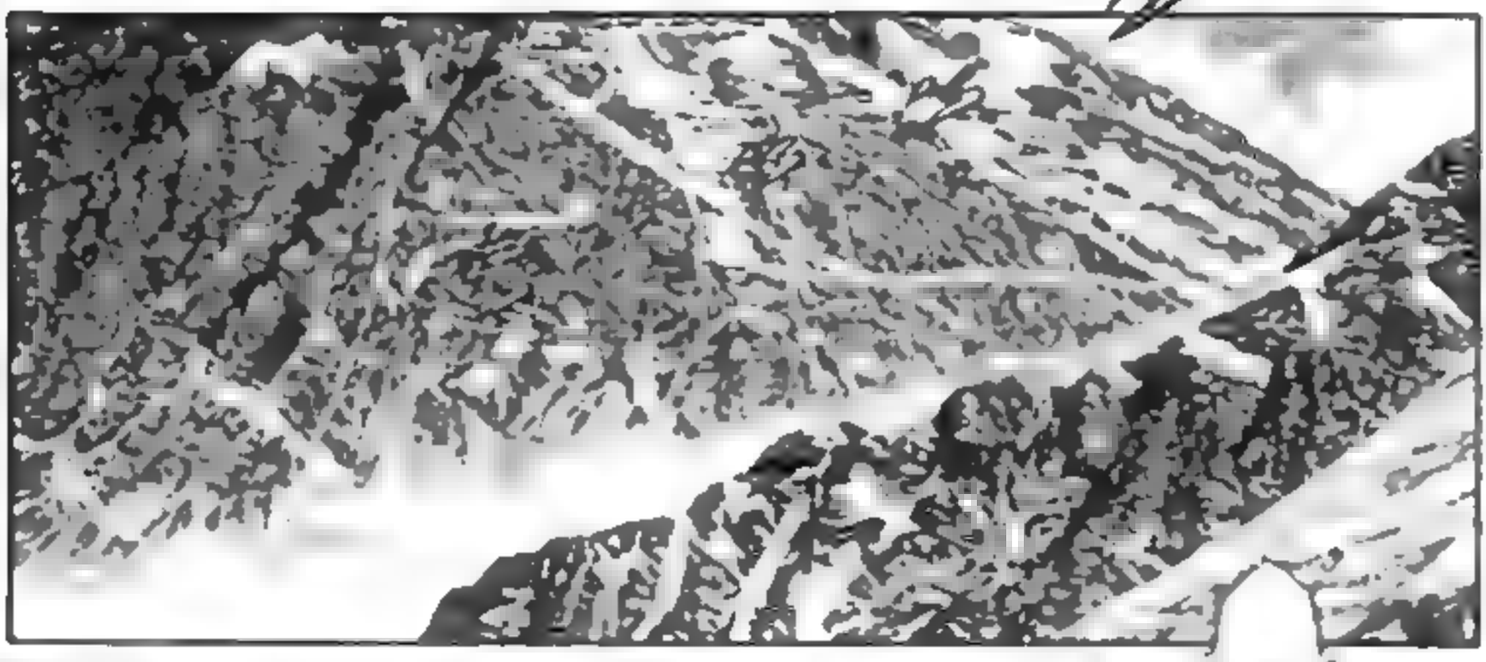
CHEAP!
YOU NOT BUY?


THE OTHER TIMES, HE CAME AS A MEMBER OF AN EXPEDITION OF CLIMBERS.
BROOM
BROOM
BROOM
BIIP BIIP
BIIP
DURING THE FIRST ONE, HE WAS STILL A STUDENT. IT WAS THE ONLY TIME WHEN HE WAS ALONE.

THIS TIME AGAIN, FUKAMACHI HAD MADE THIS TRIP AS PHOTOGRAPHER IN A JAPANESE TEAM COME TO OVERCOME EVEREST.
FUKAMACHI MAKOTO, 40 YEARS OLD.

A STRONG FEELING OF BITTERNESS CAME BACK IN HIS MIND
EACH TIME HE WAS THINKING ABOUT THIS EXPEDITION

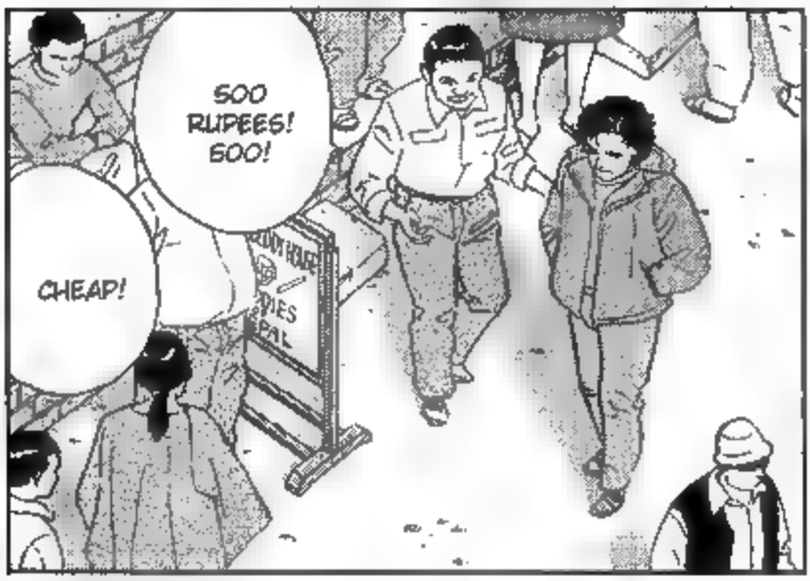
Fwwwshh



I THINK IT'S BETTER TO GIVE UP ON THIS FIRST ASSAULT
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO CONTINUE
IT'S FURASHIMA
IS IT OK FOR EVERYBODY ?

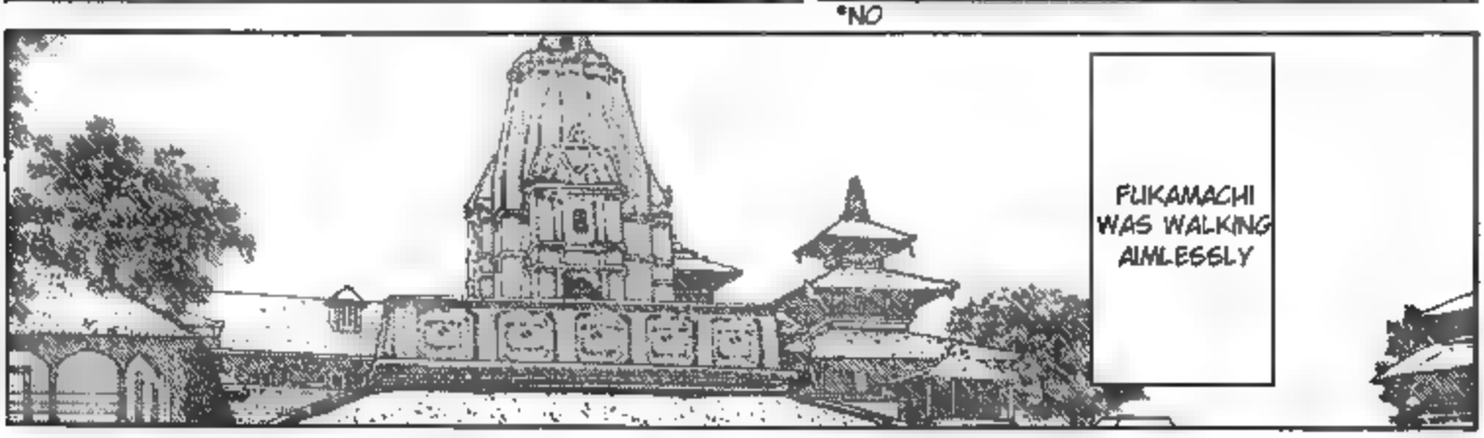
Fwwll
I REPEAT WE GO BACK DOWN
Fik Fik
WE GO BACK THEN
ALL RIGHT, UNDERSTOOD.
Fik
BE CAREFUL ON THE RE-DESCENT
OK
Fwwwwwwsh!!
DRUGS. CHEAP.
YOU BUY ?

ALL THAT YOU WANT
MARIJUANA ...
HASHISH ...


500 RUPEES! 500!
CHEAP!

*HOINA!
CHEAP!
1000 RUPEES
YOU BUY ?

*NO

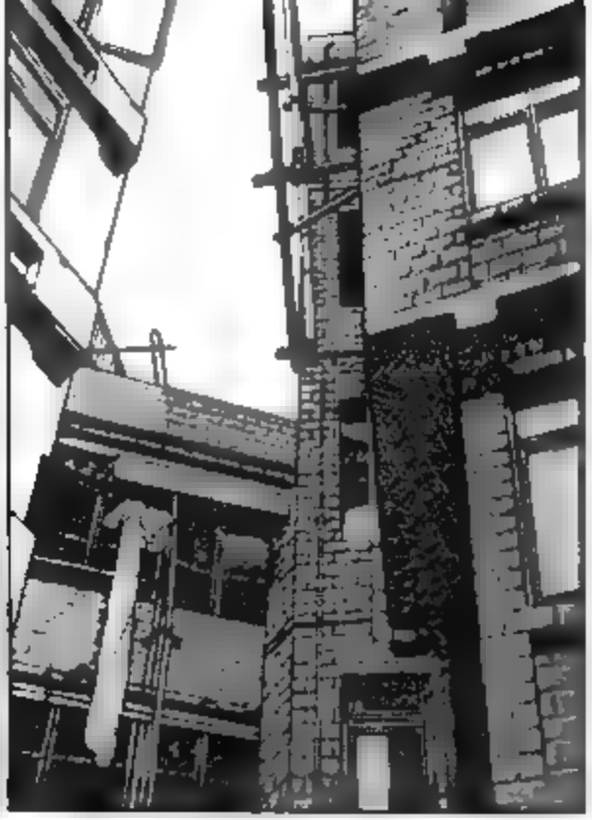

FUKAMACHI WAS WALKING AIMLESSLY

FUKAMICHI DIDN'T WANT TO STAY IN HIS ROOM TO RUMINATE HIS THOUGHTS.
IN THE BEGINNING OF THE AFTERNOON, THE RAIN FINALLY STOPPED.
IN JULY, WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE MONSOON, THE VALLEY OF KATHMANDU ENTERS THE RAIN SEASON.

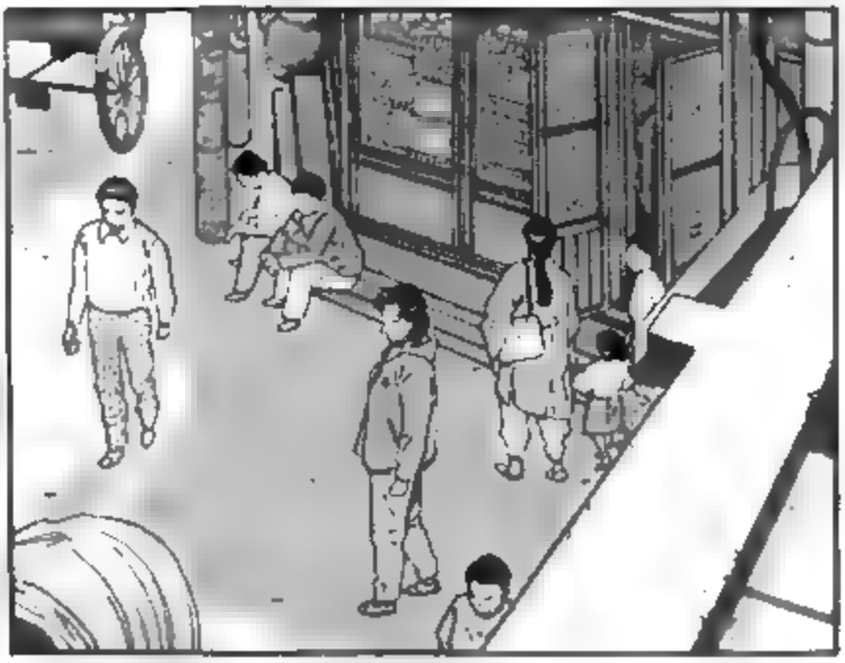
TO TAKE DRUGS THAT HE HAD NOT TAKEN YET
HIS ONLY PURPOSE WAS TO ROAM IN THE STREETS OF THE CITY
HE THOUGHT THAT THE FEELINGS WHICH OPPRESSED HIM WOULD DISSIPATE
GET LOST IN ITS INTERIOR
SINK INTO THE HEART OF THE CITY

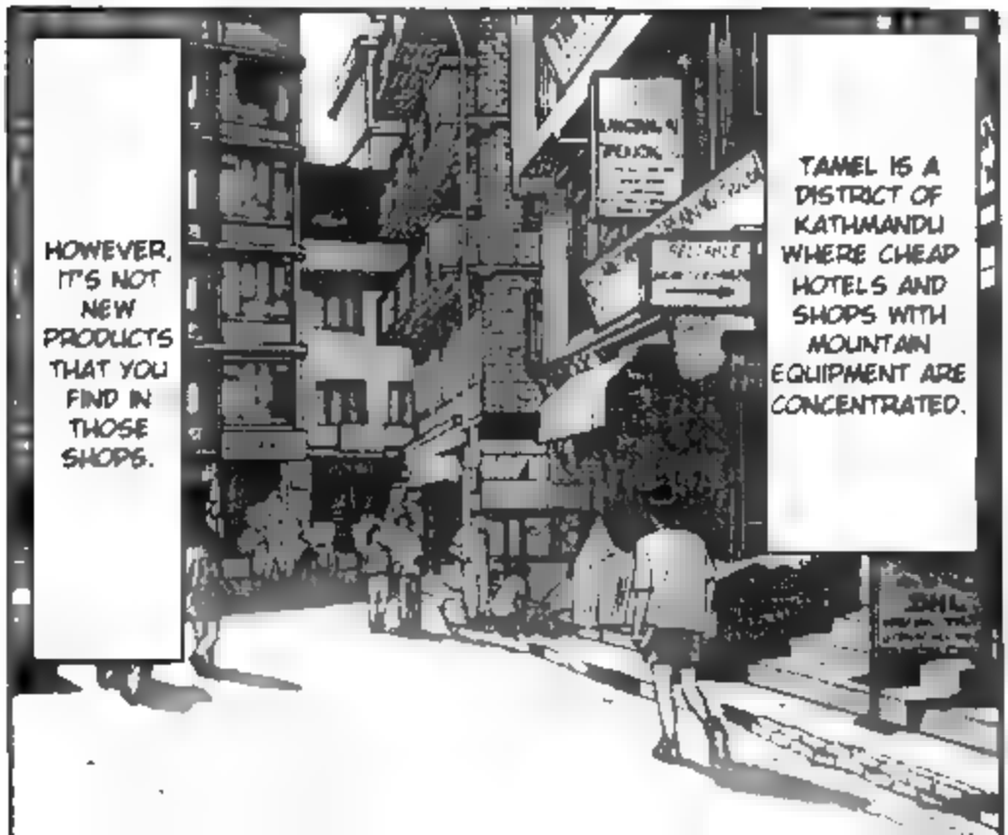
A DEAD-END ...

AH...

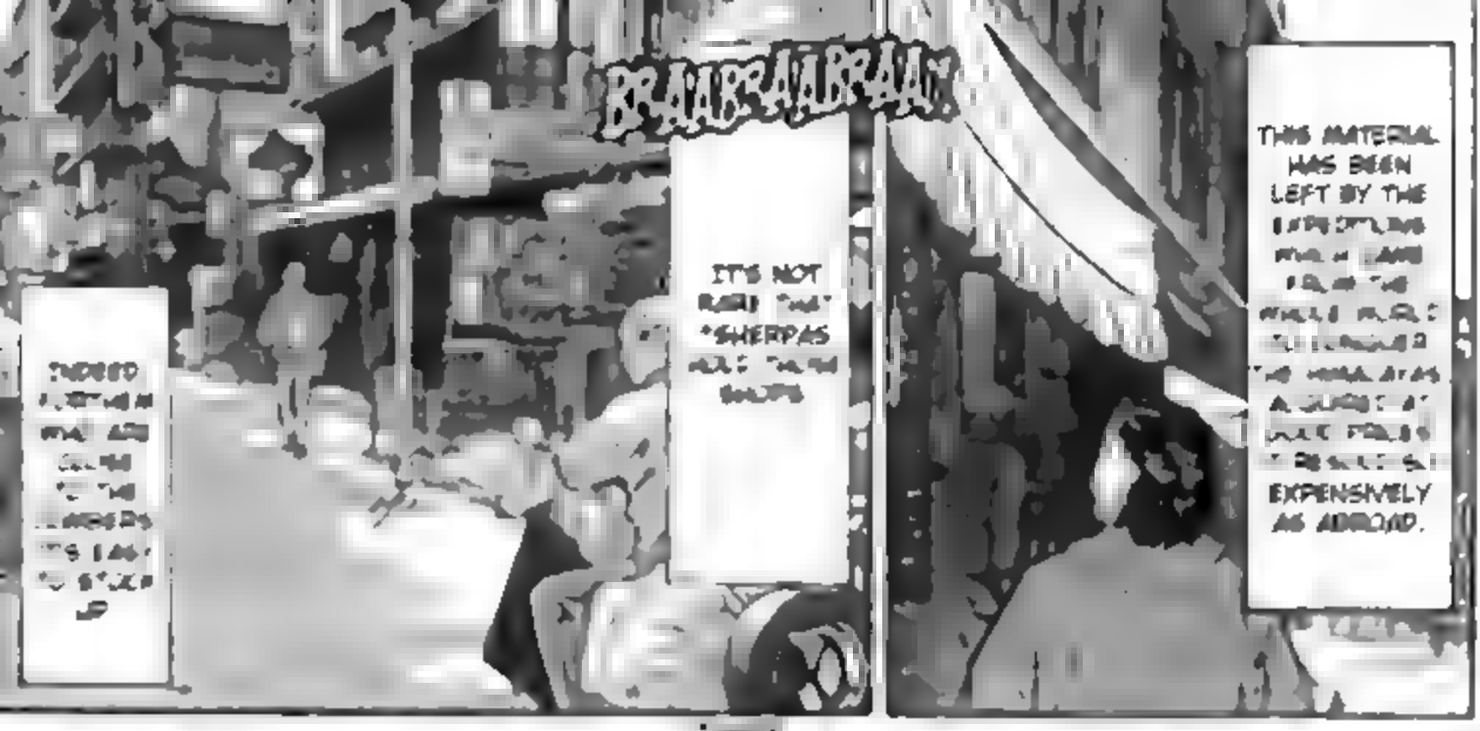


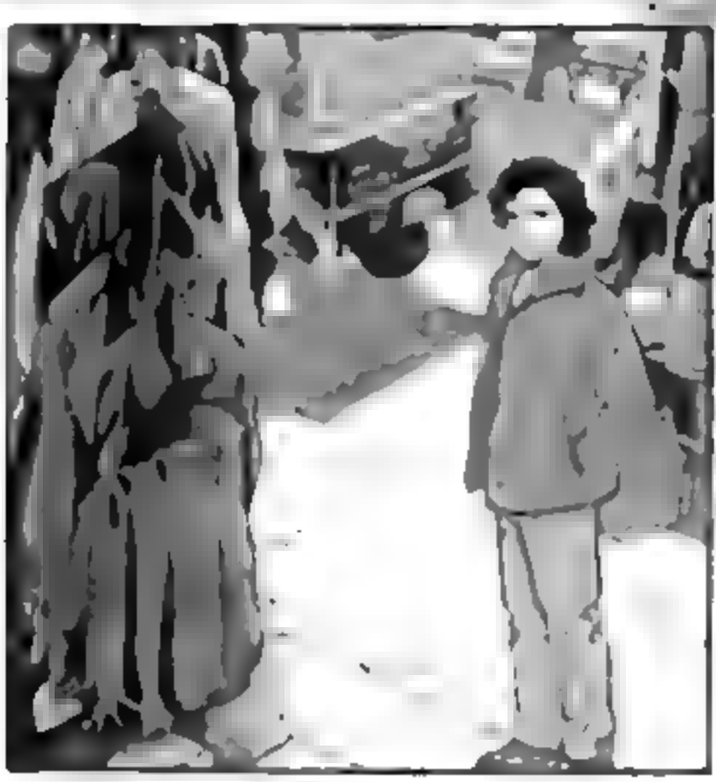
WHERE AM I... ?




TAMEL IS A DISTRICT OF KATHMANDU WHERE CHEAP HOTELS AND SHOPS WITH MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT ARE CONCENTRATED.
HOWEVER, IT'S NOT NEW PRODUCTS THAT YOU FIND IN THOSE SHOPS.

IT SEEMS THAT I WALKED UNTIL TAMEL WITHOUT NOTICING IT.
HEH ...


BRAABRAABRAAA
INDEED, FOREIGNERS WHO ARE COMING TO THE HIMALAYAS IT'S EASY TO STICK UP
IT'S NOT RARE THAT *SHERPAS HOLD THEIR SHOPS
THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN LEFT BY THE EXPEDITIONS WHICH CAME FROM THE WHOLE WORLD TO CONQUER THE HIMALAYAS AS A QUEST AT HIGH PRICES EXPENSIVELY AS ABROAD.

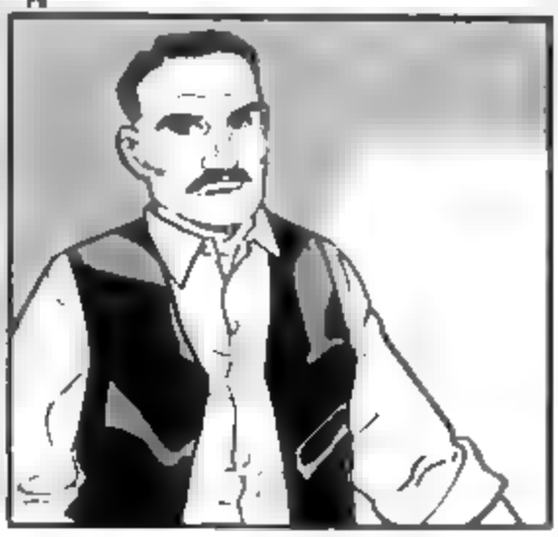


P.O BOX
"SAGARMATHA"
IT'S THE NEPALESE NAME FOR EVEREST

PURANACHA IS NOT ENTER THIS SHOP
IS IT BECAUSE HE WAS ATTRACTED BY THE NAME ?

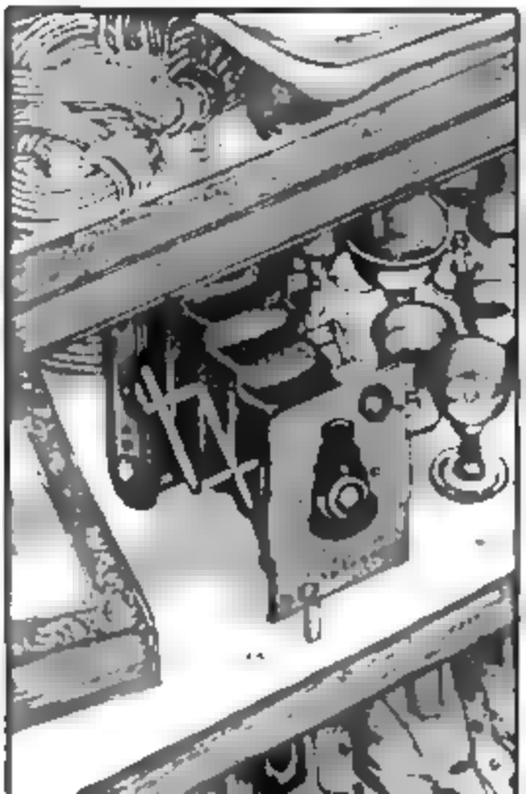
THE INSIDE OF THE SHOP WAS NOT VERY EN-LIGHTENED
THE SURLY MAN BEHIND THE COUNTER WASN'T A GUIDE, BUT PROBABLY A CHERETI

*NAMASTE!

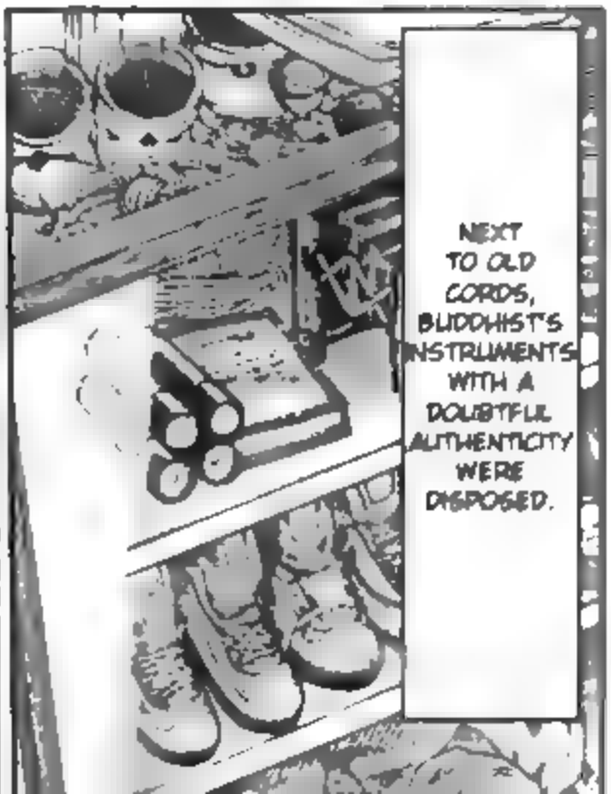

*HI

IT SEEMS IT'S MORE AN ANTIQUE DEALERSHIP ...

RATHER THAN A SHOP OF MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT ...
MM...



OH...


NEXT TO OLD CORDS, BUDDHIST'S INSTRUMENTS WITH A DOUBTFUL AUTHENTICITY WERE DISPOSED.

DOROM
FUKAMACHI HAD THE FEELING THAT HE ALREADY SAW THIS CAMERA SOMEWHERE
BUT WHERE
DOROM
KODAK

DoDoM
I SEE AND THINK ABOUT IT
NOT BUT ?
JUST SEE ?
TWO CAMERA DEMANDS ?
tOk
Mas

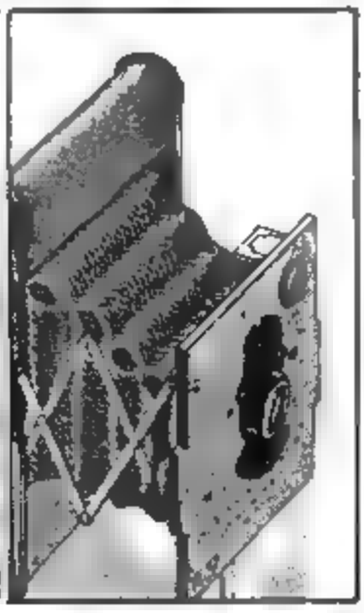
*HOW MANY?
**CAN YOU PROPOSE ME A CHEAPER PRICE?

tok

NO, NO
NEW, 500¢, BROKEN, 200¢
...

I TAKE IT.
OK!

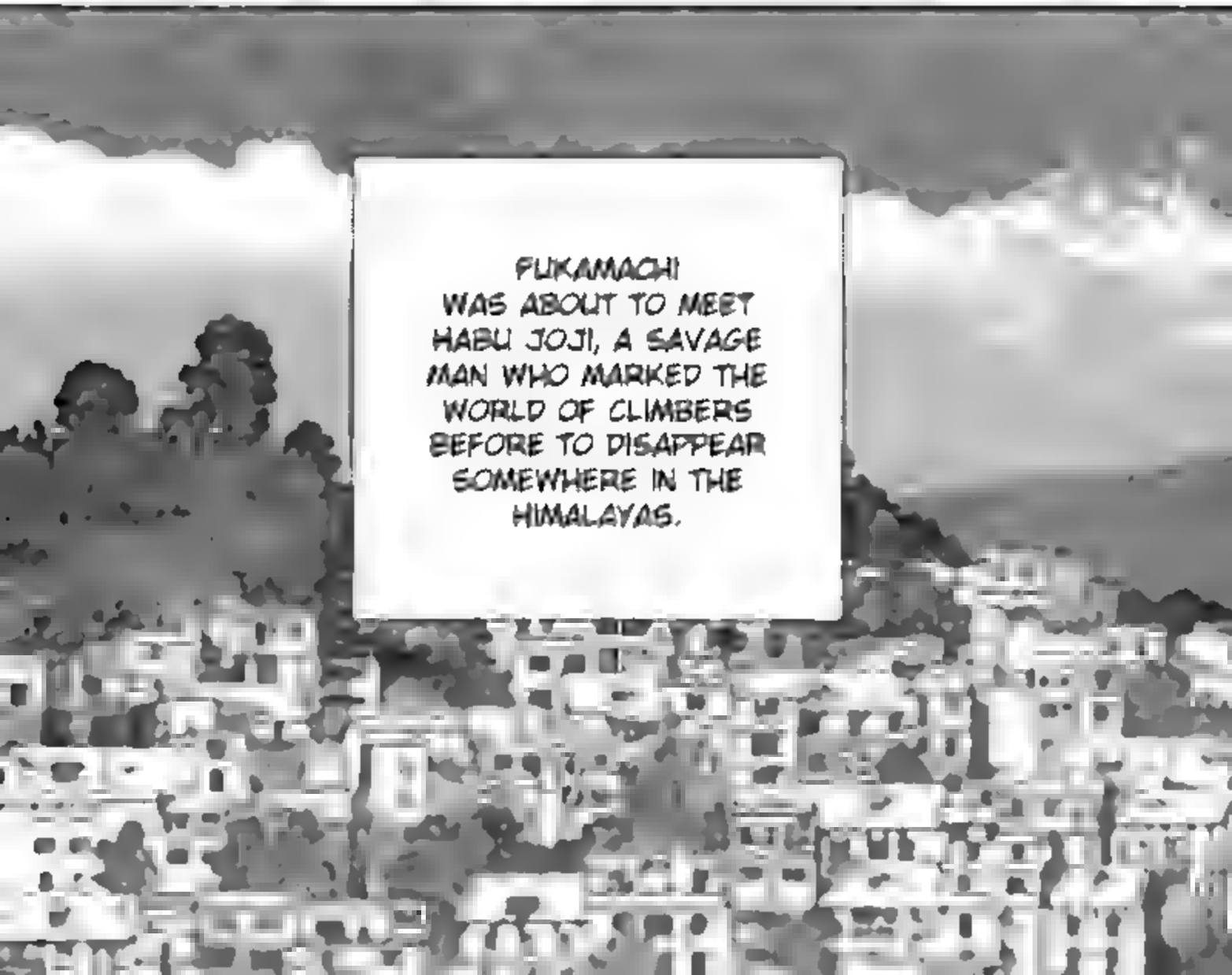
150¢



FUKAMACHI DIDN'T SUSPECT ANYTHING
Beer
COUNTRY ROAD

AH AH AH!!!
JAPANESE ALWAYS MAKE GOOD TRADES

THIS CAMERA WOULD BRING HIM TO MEET


FUKAMACHI WAS ABOUT TO MEET HABU JOJI, A SAVAGE MAN WHO MARKED THE WORLD OF CLIMBERS BEFORE TO DISAPPEAR SOMEWHERE IN THE HIMALAYAS.

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Tranlsated by kabuto- & vensu
Edited by vensu
Checked by numeral

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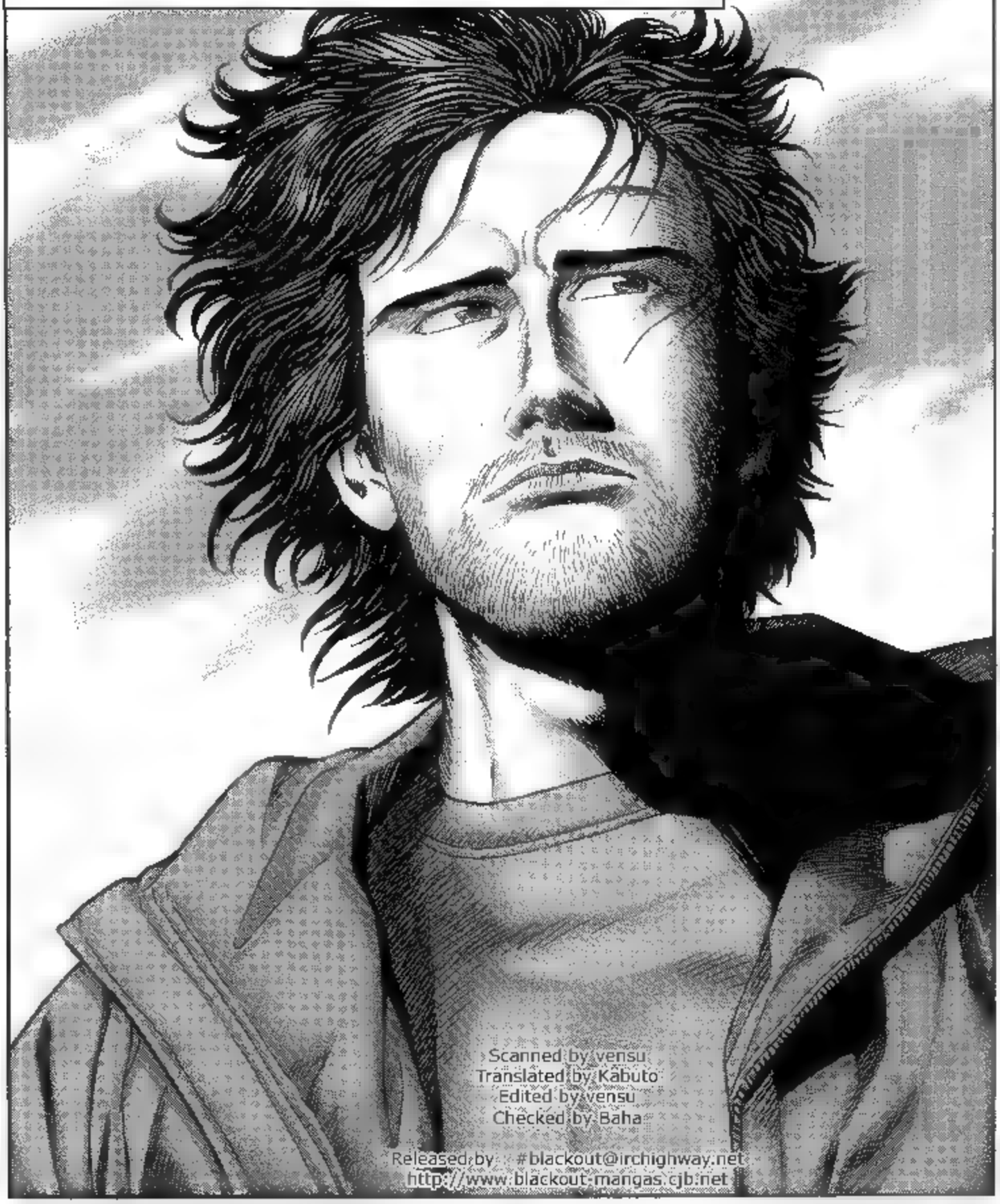
The town of all the dreams



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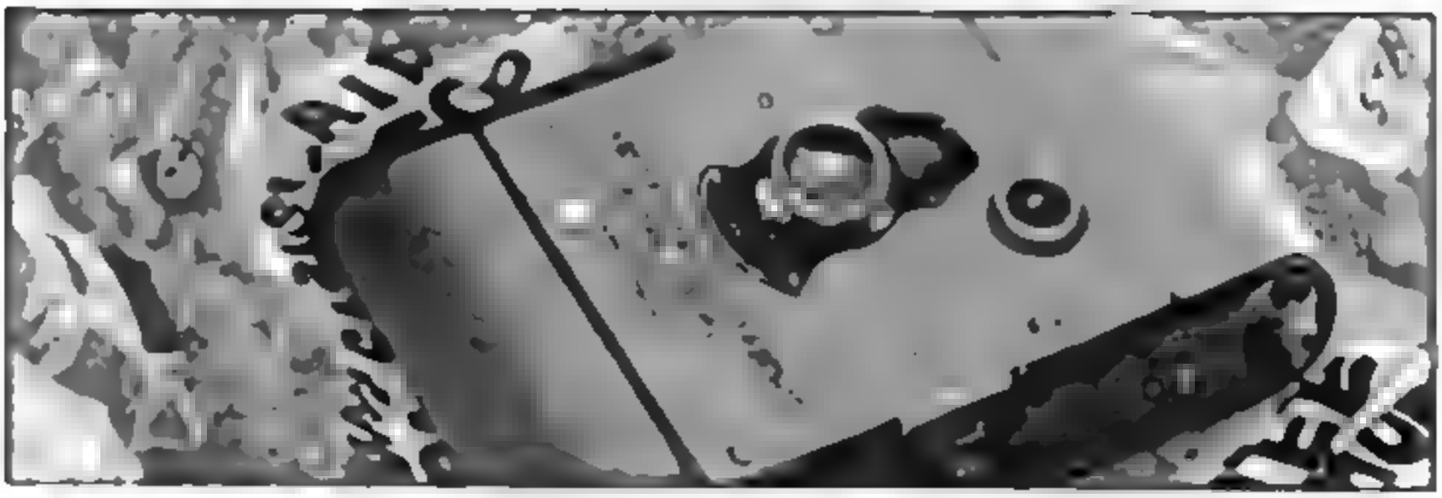
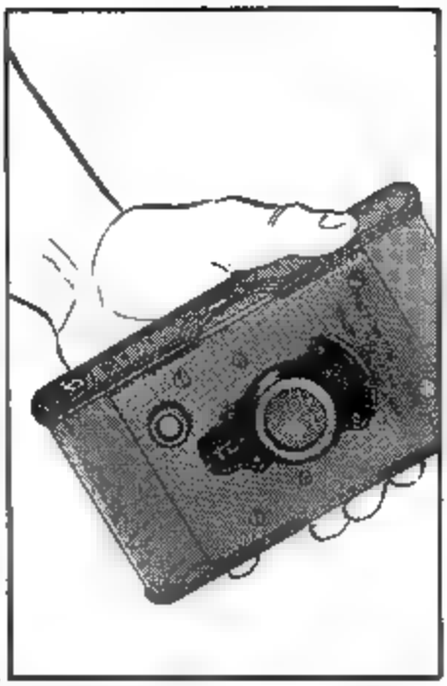
ZAAAM

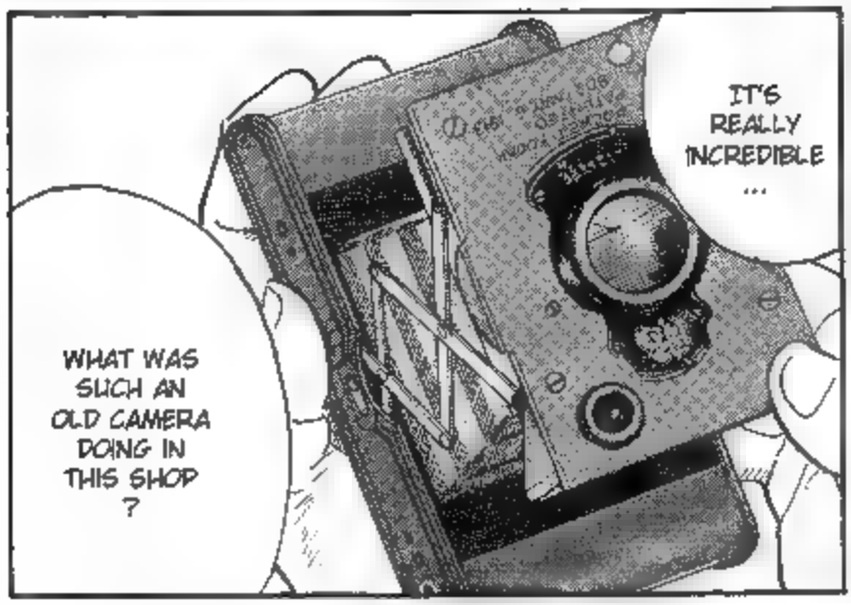


Ch

FWAP

TCHAK




WHAT WAS SUCH AN OLD CAMERA DOING IN THIS SHOP ?
IT'S REALLY INCREDIBLE ...

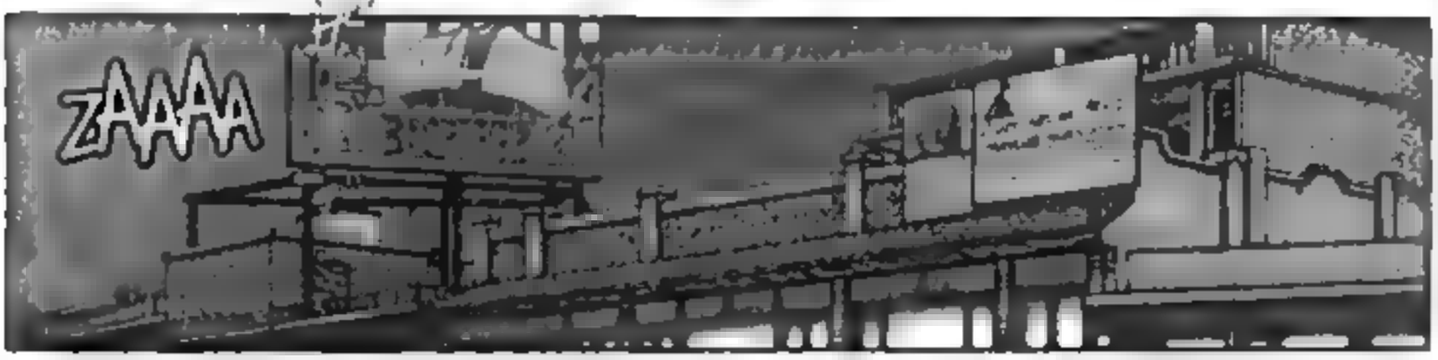
WHY TAKE THE TROUBLE TO BRING A SUCH ANTIQUITY TO THE MOUNTAINS ?
AND...

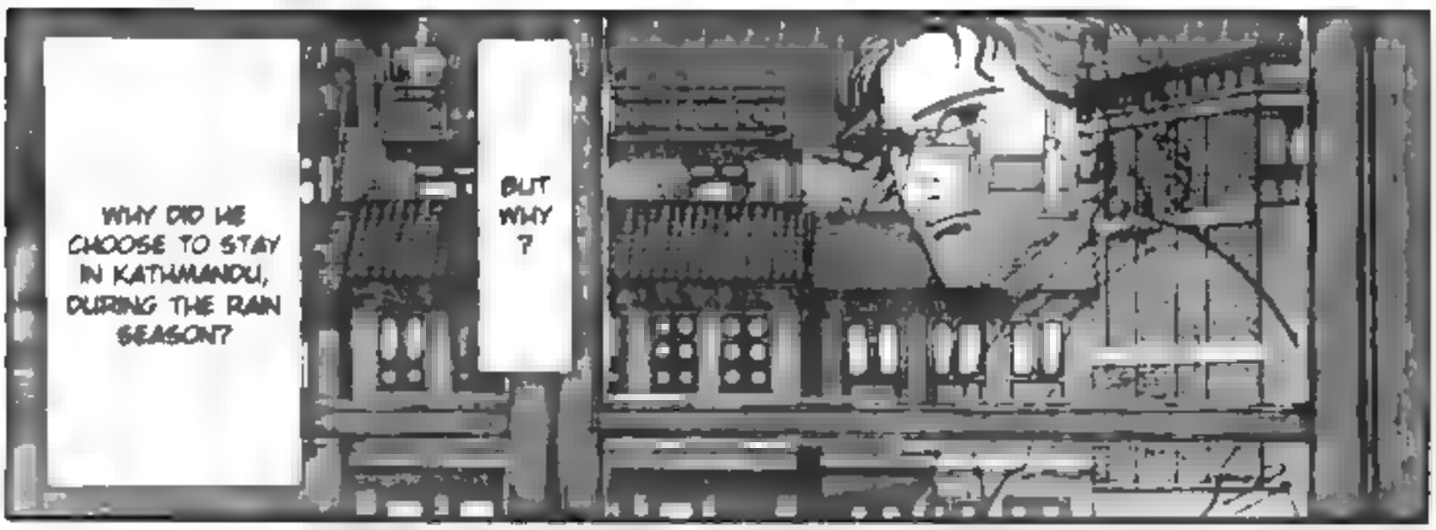
ZAAAAAAAA
IT'S NOT CONCEIVABLE THAT AN EXPEDITION BROUGHT IT TO MAKE SHOTS ...
UNLESS THE PHOTOGRAPHER WAS PASSIONATE ABOUT OLD MODELS.
IT'S NOT COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE ... BUT IT REMAINS NOT VERY LIKELY ...

IT TURNS OUT THAT THIS CAMERA IS INDEED THE ONE I THINK IT IS ...
IF EVER ...

HE HAD TO WAIT FOR A CALL FROM JAPAN ABOUT THIS CAMERA.
FUKA-MICHI WAITED

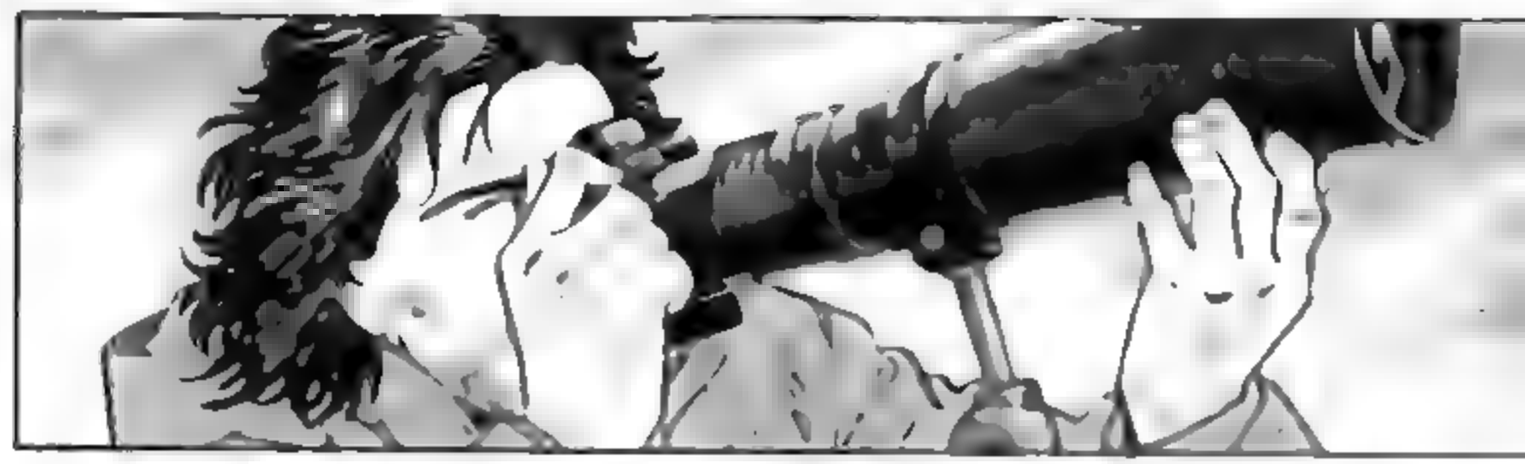
I'D HAVE REALLY BEEN FORTUNATE TO PROLONG MY STAY IN KATHMANDU ...


ZAAAA

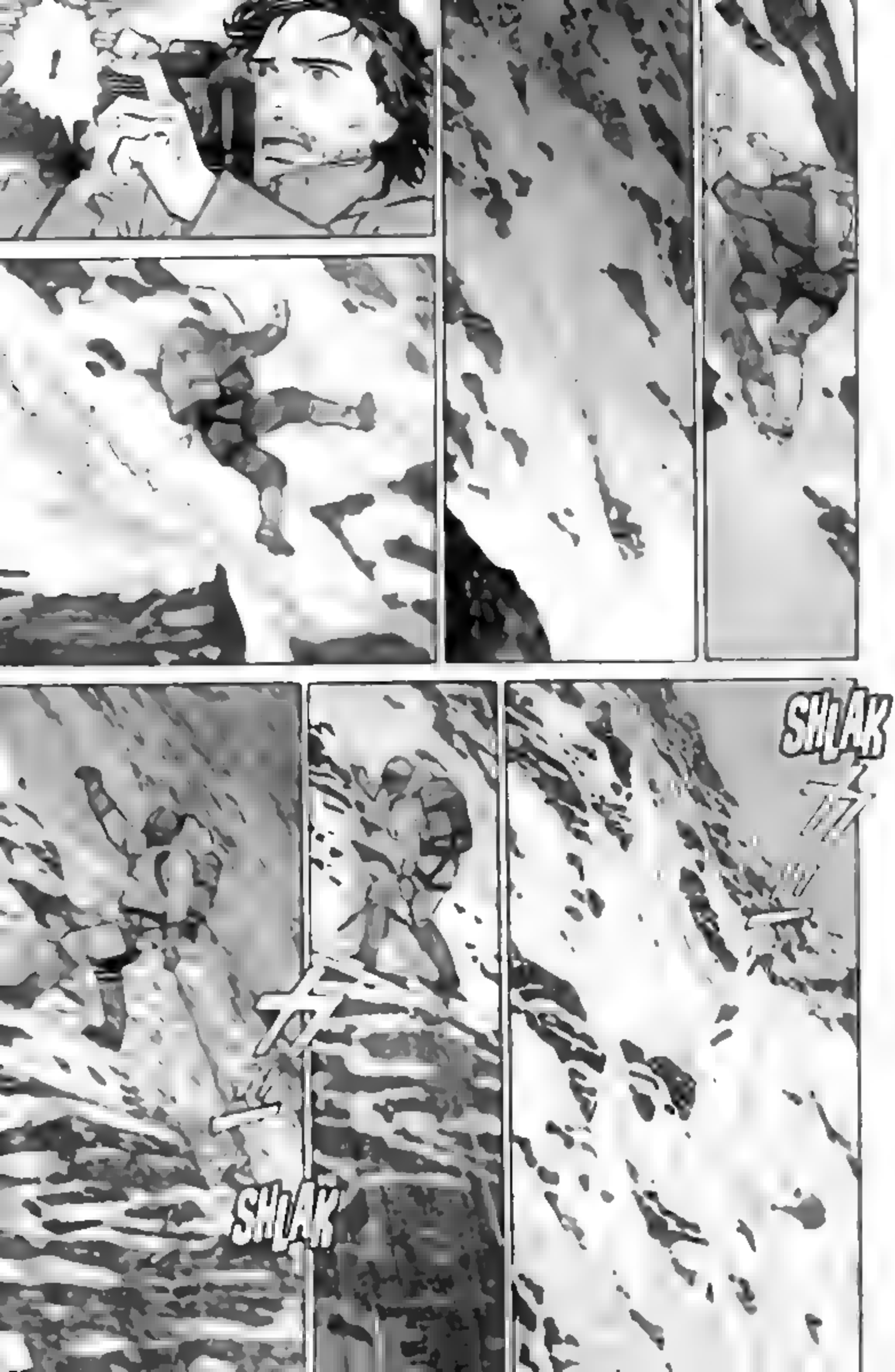

WHY DID HE CHOOSE TO STAY IN KATHMANDU, DURING THE RAIN SEASON?
BUT WHY ?

THEY WERE SEVEN WHEN ARRIVING AT KATHMANDU, IN APRIL, BUT THEY WERE NO
FAILURE.
THE FINAL ASSAULT HAD BEEN DELAYED, THE MONSOON WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN. EVERYBODY TRIED THEIR BEST, BUT AFTER ALL, TWO MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION DIED ON THE HILLSIDE OF THE SOUTHWEST SIDE.

THE HEIGHT ASIDE, THE PLACE PRESENTED NO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES.



THEY HAD JUST GIVEN UP PURSUING THE ASCENT AND BEGAN TO COME DOWN, THEN
Fwccccsh!

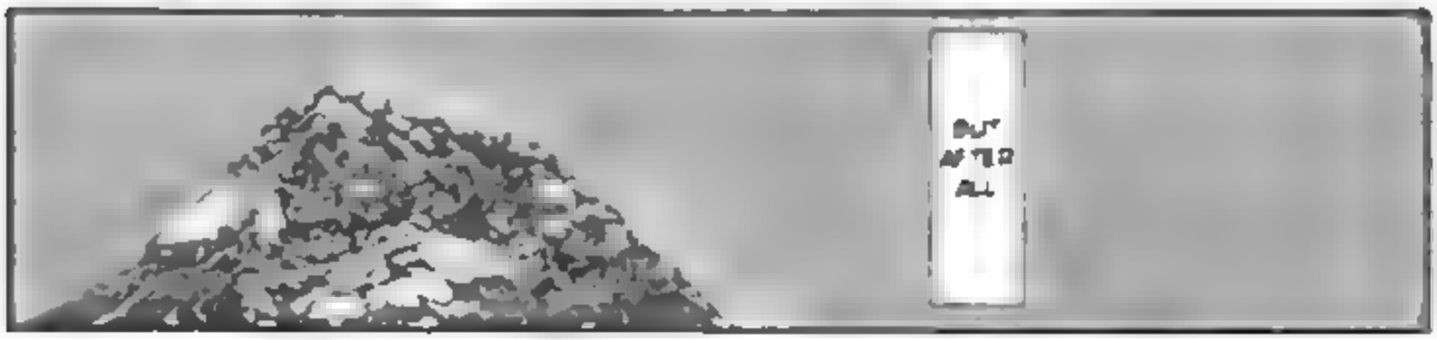

SHLAK
SHLAK

SHIAK
SHIAK
SHIAK
SHIAK
FORGETTING ALL THE REST, FURAKICHI PRESSED THE RELEASED MECHANISM OF HIS CAMERA

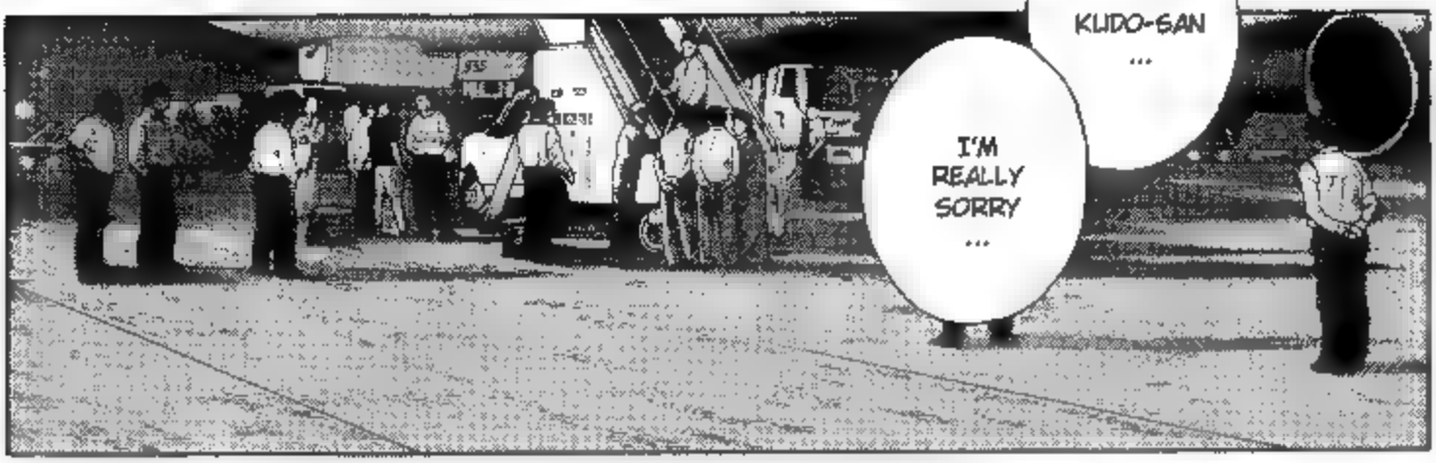
THEIR FACES.
THE RED OF FUKAMICHI'S RUCKSACK HAD BECOME SOAKED IN HIS RETINAS.
ZAAAAAA
FUKAMICHI TRIED HARD TO FORGET
PRESENT IN HIS SPIRIT.

THE ORIGINALITY OF THIS ASCENT'S ATTEMPT OF MT. EVEREST LAY IN THE AGE OF ITS PARTICIPANTS : EXCEPT FUKAMACHI, ALL WERE MORE THAN 46 YEARS OLD

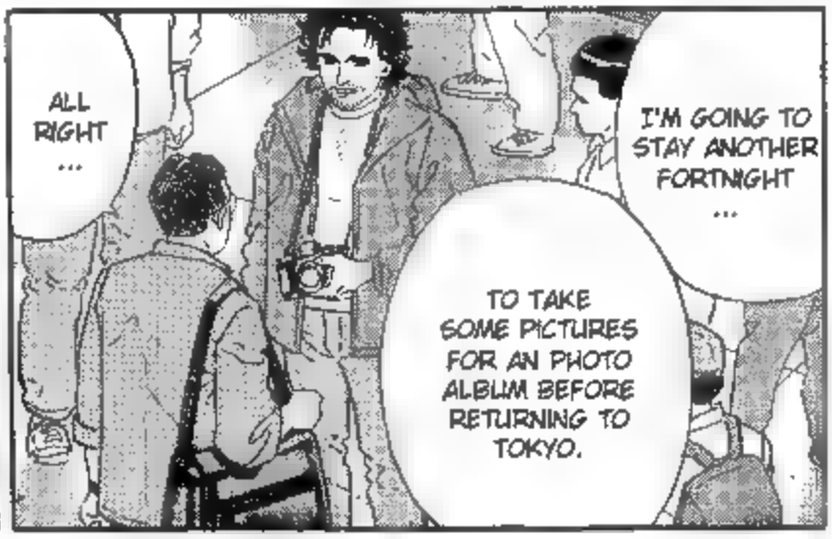
THAT WAS ENOUGH ORIGINALITY TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THE MEDIA
ONE WAS A DOCTOR, ANOTHER ONE WAS A EMPLOYEE AT A COMPANY, THE THIRD CONTROLLED A REAL ESTATE AGENCY, COMMON PEOPLE WHO ATTACKED THE HIGHEST SUMMIT OF THE WORLD.


BUT AFTER ALL

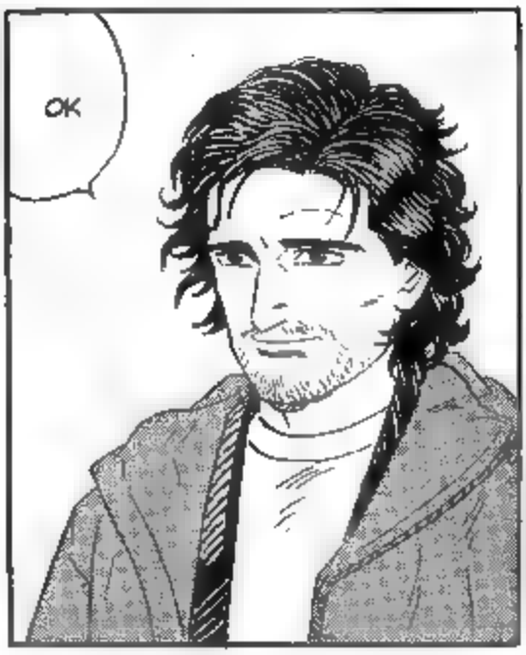
THE EXPEDITION ENDED WITH THE DEATH OF TWO OF ITS MEMBERS


KUDO-SAN ...
I'M REALLY SORRY ...

CALL ME WHEN YOU HAVE A MOMENT, WE SHALL GO DRINK A GLASS TOGETHER
TAKE CARE.


ALL RIGHT ...
I'M GOING TO STAY ANOTHER FORTNIGHT ...
TO TAKE SOME PICTURES FOR AN PHOTO ALBUM BEFORE RETURNING TO TOKYO.

IN THAT CASE, I'LL SEE YOU SOON ...
IN JAPAN.


OK

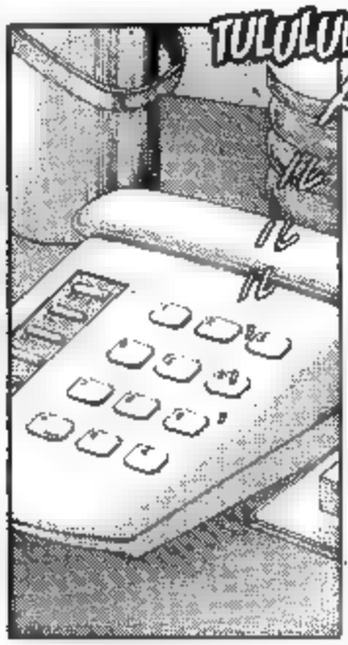
GLOUB

PFUUUA

WHY DID I DECIDE TO STAY IN NEPAL ...?

HERE IS HOW FUKAMICHI TRIED TO PERSUADE HIMSELF.
IT'S NOT BECAUSE I TRY TO AVOID TOKYO ...
BECAUSE I STILL HAVE TO TAKE SOME PICTURES. THAT'S ALL.

YES?
AH! FUKAMICHI-SAN?

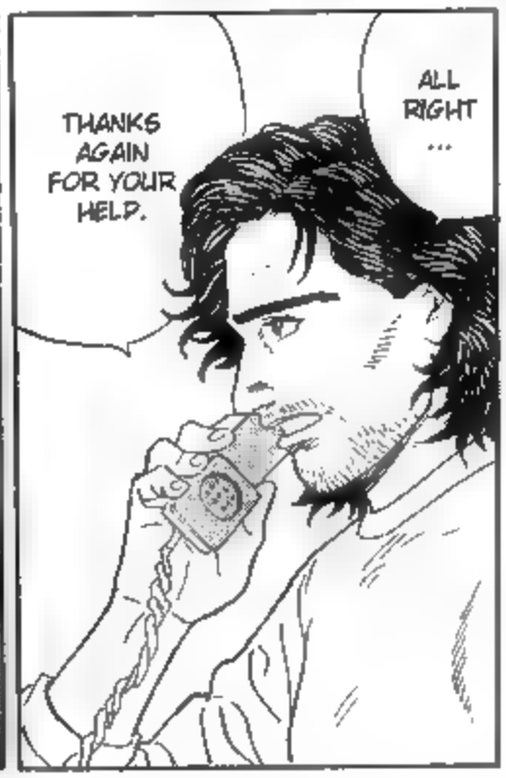

TULULULU

I WAS WAITING FOR YOUR CALL. DID YOU CHECK IT ?
YES, IT'S DONE.
IT WAS REALLY THAT!

OH!
IT'S MIYAKAWA

VEST POCKET AUTOGRAPHIC KODAK SPECIAL
IT'S INDEED THE MODEL THAT MALORY HAD WITH HIM ON HIS ASSAULT OF MT. EVEREST IN 1924.

WHAT'S GOING ON, FUKAMICHI-SAN?
WHY ARE YOU SO INTERESTED THAT CAMERA SUDDENLY?
DID YOU FIND OUT SOMETHING INTERESTING ?
COUNTRY ROAD

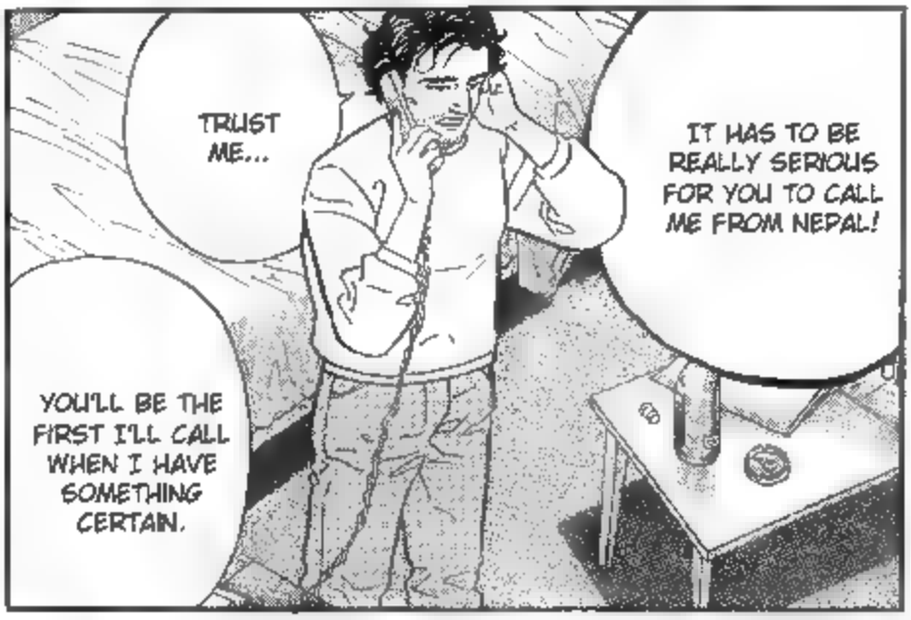

THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP.
ALL RIGHT ...

NO
OH! SO MUCH MYSTERY! COME ON, TELL ME WHAT'S ABOUT!
I CAN'T TELL YOU SOMETHING AT THE MOMENT.

I HAVE TO PURSUE MY INVESTIGATION ...
BEFORE TO KNOW IF IT'S WORTH IT OR NOT.

IT'S TOO SOON TO TELL

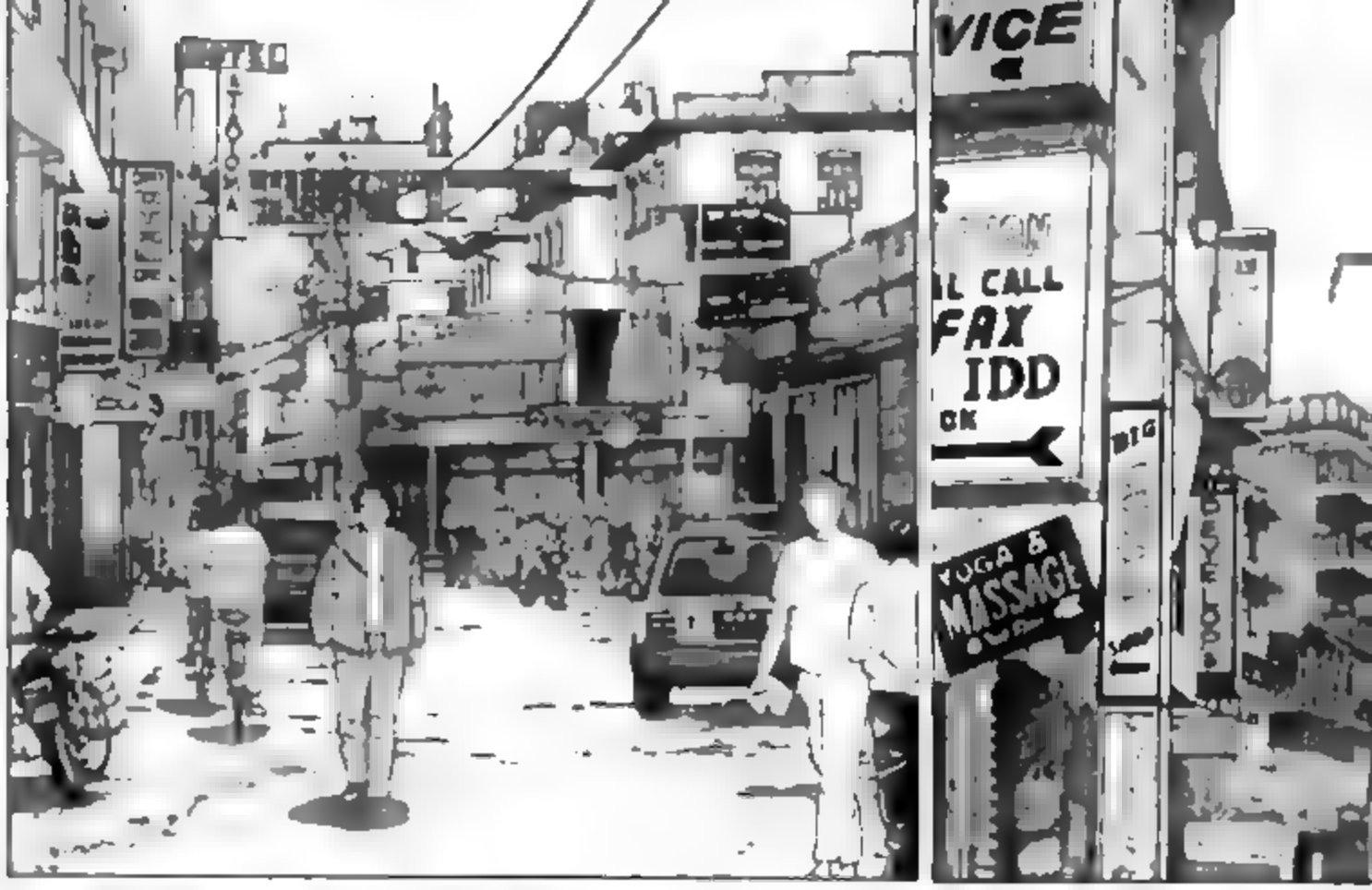
I'LL CALL YOU AGAIN IF I NEED OTHER INFORMATION.

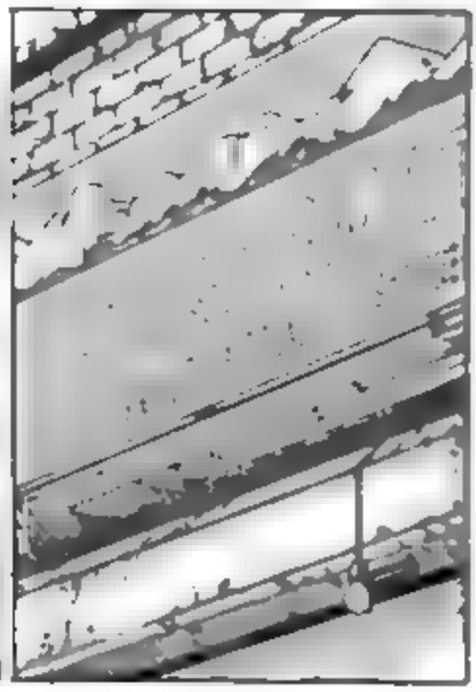

TRUST ME...
IT HAS TO BE REALLY SERIOUS FOR YOU TO CALL ME FROM NEPAL!
YOU'LL BE THE FIRST I'LL CALL WHEN I HAVE SOMETHING CERTAIN.

TCHAK

OK
AT YOUR SERVICE
THANKS, SEE YOU SOON.
GEMS

SHAKE UP THE
HISTORY OF
HIMALAYAN
CLIMBING.
Fwooosh!!!



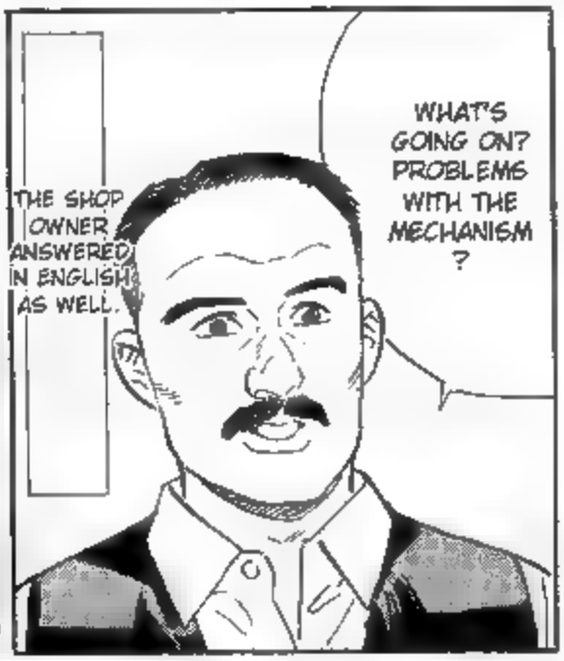


*ne

HE HOPED THAT HIS INTERLOCUTOR WOULD LISTEN TO HIS HESITANT ENGLISH

FUKAMICHI SPOKE IN ENGLISH
IT'S ABOUT THE CAMERA I BOUGHT YESTERDAY.
I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOU
...

ABOUT THIS CAMERA ?
I'D LIKE TO KNOW SOMETHING.
NO, NO PROBLEM.


THE SHOP OWNER ANSWERED IN ENGLISH AS WELL.
WHAT'S GOING ON? PROBLEMS WITH THE MECHANISM ?

...

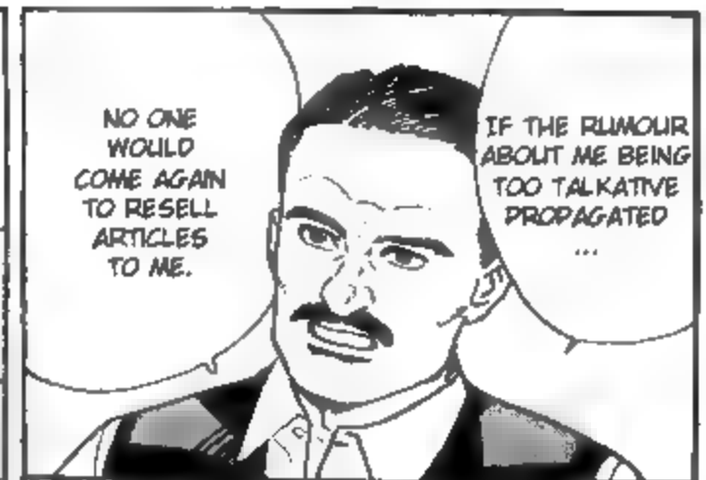
CAN YOU TELL ME WHO SOLD IT TO YOU?

YEAH
ABOUT ITS PREVIOUS OWNER.
OH...

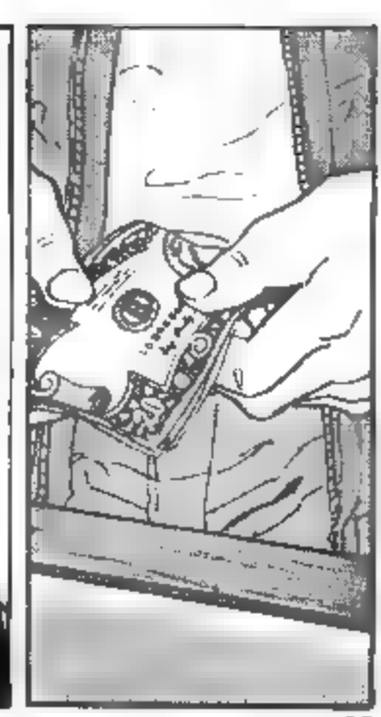
I'M SURE ...
THAT YOU UNDERSTAND ME.

...
YOU KNOW, I CAN'T REMEMBER EVERYBODY.
AND...
EVEN IF I REMEMBERED IT, I COULDN'T TELL YOU.

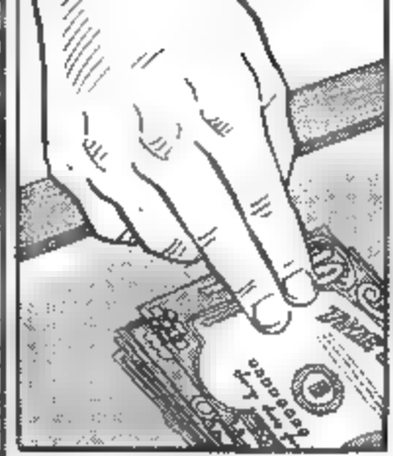
ALL RIGHT, I SEE.
BUT I'M READY TO PAY FOR THIS SERVICE, YOU KNOW.
NO, NO.
IT'S NOT ABOUT MONEY.


NO ONE WOULD COME AGAIN TO RESELL ARTICLES TO ME.
IF THE RUMOUR ABOUT ME BEING TOO TALKATIVE PROPAGATED ...

N..NO! IT'S NO USE TO INSIST.
PLEASE.



HEH... YOU'RE SURPRISING ME...
TSSS
THEN? YOU CAN INFORM ME?



...
BY SELLING YOU THIS CAMERA.
IT SEEMS LIKE I'VE BEEN FOOLED ...

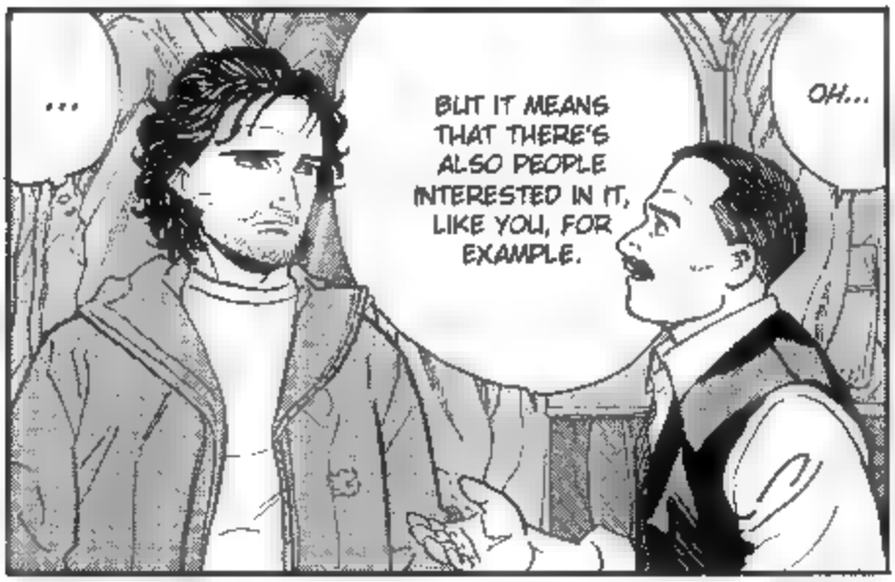
HEHEHE ...

BUT, APPARENTLY, IT WAS WORTH MORE MONEY THAN WHAT I THOUGHT OF ...
ABOUT THAT, I STILL DON'T KNOW.
THAT'S WHY I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHO BROUGHT IT TO YOU.

I GAVE UP IT TO YOU FOR ONLY 150 DOLLARS

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL, ABOUT THIS CAMERA ?
SAY ...

HUM ...
DO YOU ACCEPT TO TELL ME ?

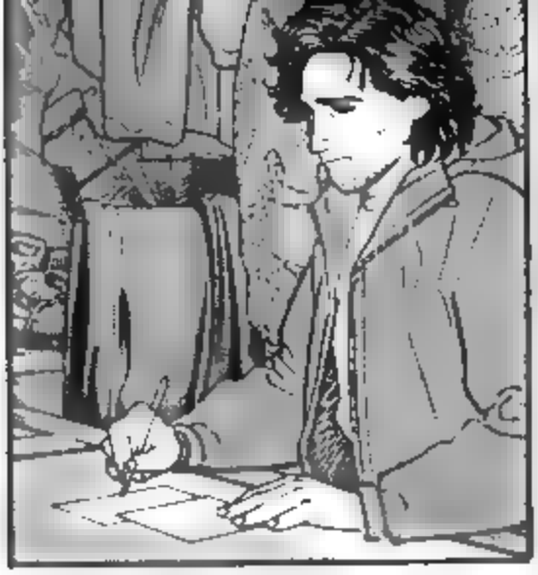

...
BUT IT MEANS THAT THERE'S ALSO PEOPLE INTERESTED IN IT, LIKE YOU, FOR EXAMPLE.
OH...

NOTHING. FOR SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T HAVE INTEREST IN IT, IT'S JUST AN OLD CAMERA OUT OF USE

THEN HERE'S THE DEAL! YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE ME YOUR LOCATION, OK?
PERFECT!
WE CAN SAY THAT.
HUM ...

HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU THINK YOU NEED TO REMEMBER SOMETHING ?

...
AND IF I'M ABLE TO REMEMBER SOMETHING, I'LL CALL YOU!
I'M GOING TO THINK ABOUT IT FOR A LITTLE BIT ...

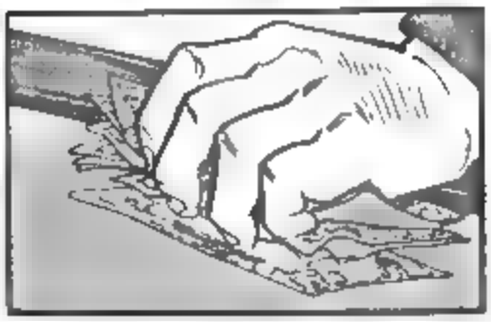


HMM ...
MAYBE TODAY
OK!
ALL RIGHT

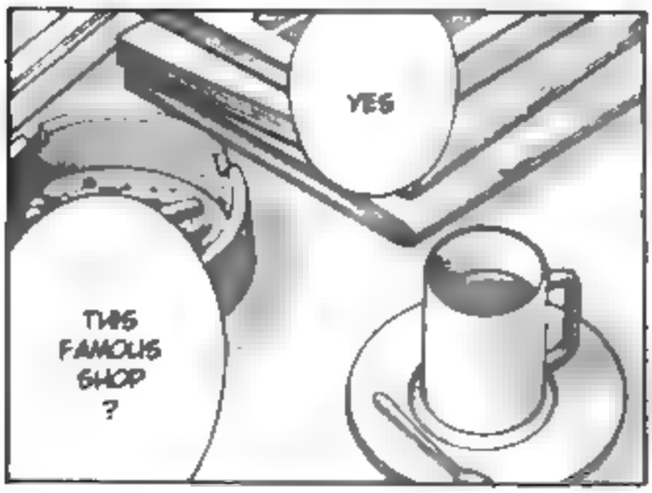
CALL THIS NUMBER.
BY MEASURE OF SECURITY, HE PREFERRED NOT TO REVEAL THE NAME OF HIS HOTEL.
FUKAMICHI WROTE ON A PIECE OF PAPER THE PHONE NUMBER OF SAIYU TRAVEL, THE TRAVEL AGENCY WHICH TOOK CARE OF FUKAMICHI'S EXPEDITION.

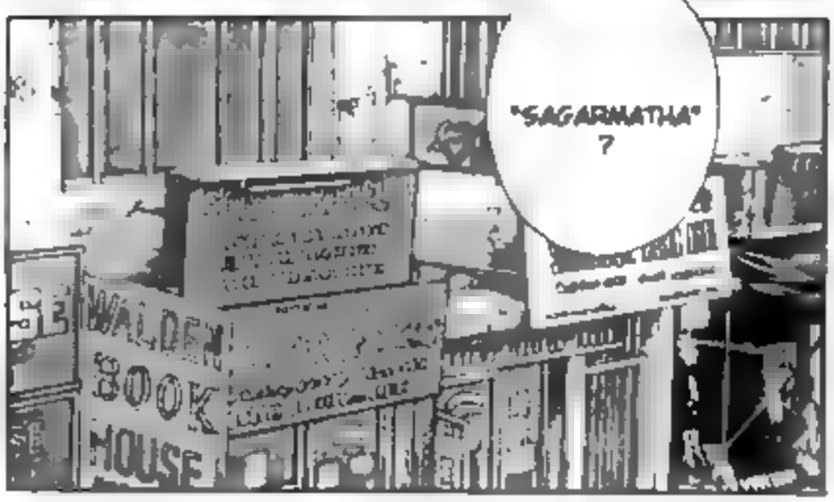
THAT'S FOR THE PHONE AND YOUR EXPENSES
YOU'LL HAVE THE REST OF THE MONEY WHEN YOUR MEMORY IS BACK.
...

OK
JUST TELL HIM THAT YOU HAVE REMEMBERED SOMETHING
LEAVE A MESSAGE TO SOMEONE CALLED "SAITO".
IT'S CLEAR.



AFTER LEAVING THE SHOP, FUKAMICHI WENT DIRECTLY TO THE AGENCY SAYU TRAVEL.





MANI KUMAR IS NOT ASHAMED OF MAKING TRADES WITH STOLEN GOODS...
THAT CARRIERS STOLE FROM EXPEDITIONS WHICH THEIR ACCOMPANY.
DRAGON HANDICRAFTS
IT'S NOT ONLY MATERIAL BROUGHT BACK BY CLIMBERS THAT IS FOR SALE OVER THERE.
TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH
A FRENCH EXPEDITION FROM WHICH SOME MATERIAL WAS STOLEN, FOUND IT IN "SAGARMATHA".
HE YES... I DON'T REMEMBER EXACTLY WHEN THAT TOOK PLACE.
STOLEN GOODS ?
WHAT ?!
IT'S A STORY WHICH MADE LITTLE NOISE AT THAT TIME.
BE CAREFUL, FUKAMICHI-SAN
I NEVER HEAR ANYTHING GOOD ABOUT THIS SHOP.

NO.
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY PARTICULAR RELATION WITH MANI KUMAR, I HOPE?
NOTHING REALLY IMPORTANT.
WELL! SAITO-SAN...
CALL ME IF YOU RECEIVE A MESSAGE.
YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!
ALL RIGHT.
I'LL BE BACK TO MY HOTEL AT THE END OF THIS AFTERNOON IF EVER ...
BEFORE GOING TO HIS HOTEL FUKAMACHI VISITED FEW LIBRARIES

"THE MYSTERY OF MALLORY AND IRVINE"
BOOK SHOP
IT'S IN THE THIRD LIBRARY THAT HE FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR.
A BOOK FROM TOM HOLZEL, WRITTEN IN COLLABORATION WITH AUDREY SALKED. A DEEP INVESTIGATION ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MALLORY DURING HIS ASCENT'S ATTEMPT OF MT. EVEREST.
ZAAAAAA

BOM
HEY!
HOTEL
SUGA
PFUU
BACK IN THIS ROOM, FUKAMICHI WAS SUDDENLY FEELING WORRIED ABOUT THE CAMERA THAT HE LEFT IN HIS RUCKSACK

A BAD FEELING ...

HMM?

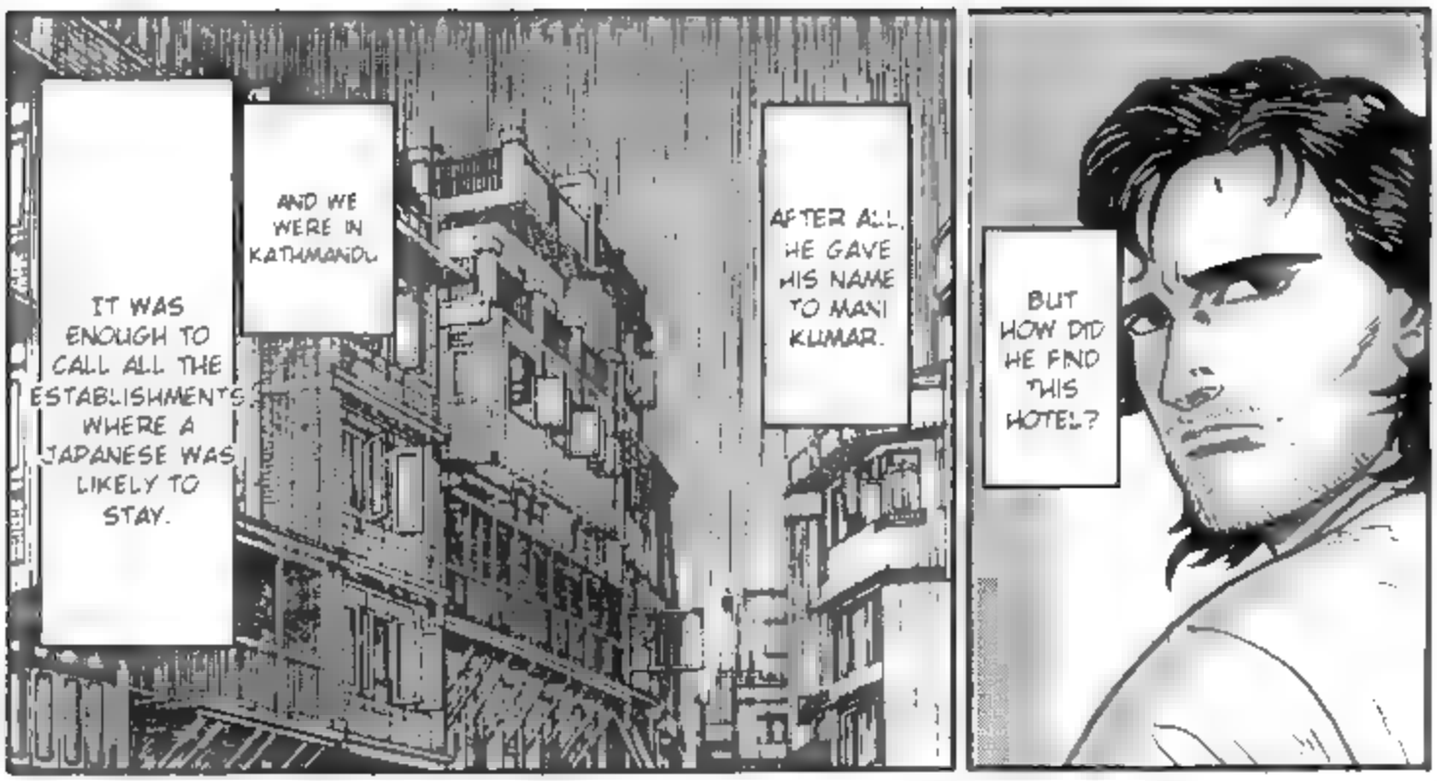
ZIIP

COULD IT BE WHAT HE FEARED OF? A SHUDDER WENT THROUGH HIS SPINE.
FRISH
FRISH
FRISH

THE BAG IN WHICH THE CAMERA WAS WRAPPED SEEMED ABNORMALLY LIGHT TO HIM.

I'VE BEEN FOOLED.

VLAM
FLAP
SHIT!
IT CAN BE ONLY HIM WHO IS BEHIND THE THEFT.
THE BANDIT ...
FWAP
MANI KUMAR ...
FUKAMICHI HADN'T IMAGINED A SINGLE MOMENT IN WHICH SOMEONE WOULD HAVE STOLEN THE CAMERA FROM HIM, ESPECIALLY NOT IN SUCH A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME ...
MANI KUMAR WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNEW ABOUT THE CAMERA

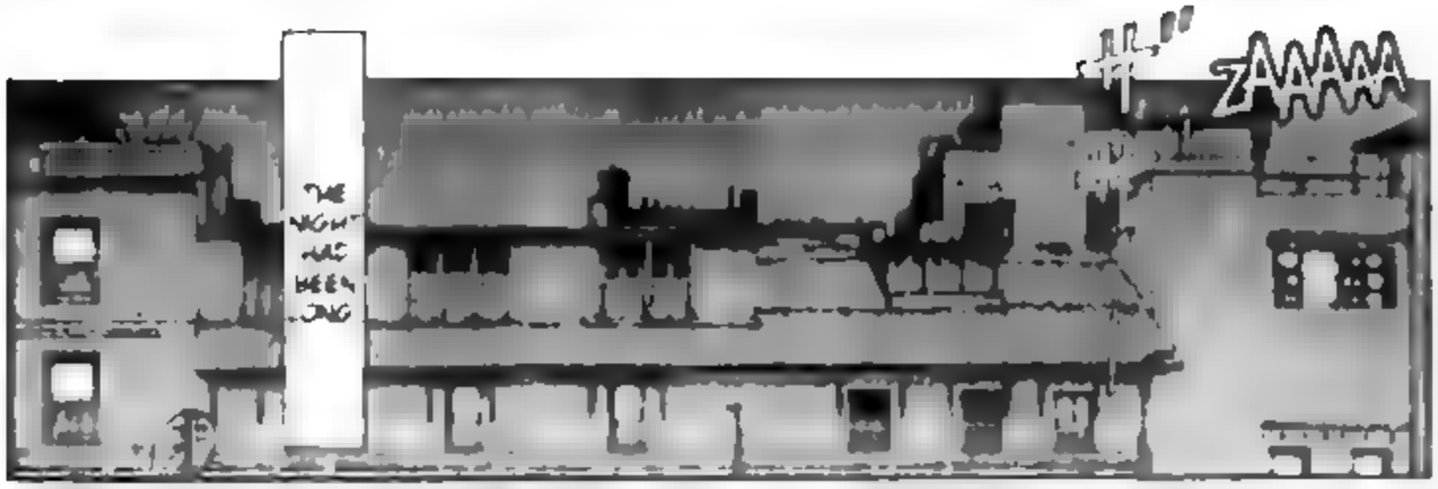

IT WAS ENOUGH TO CALL ALL THE ESTABLISHMENTS WHERE A JAPANESE WAS LIKELY TO STAY.
AND WE WERE IN KATHMANDU.
AFTER ALL, HE GAVE HIS NAME TO MANI KUMAR.
BUT HOW DID HE FIND THIS HOTEL?

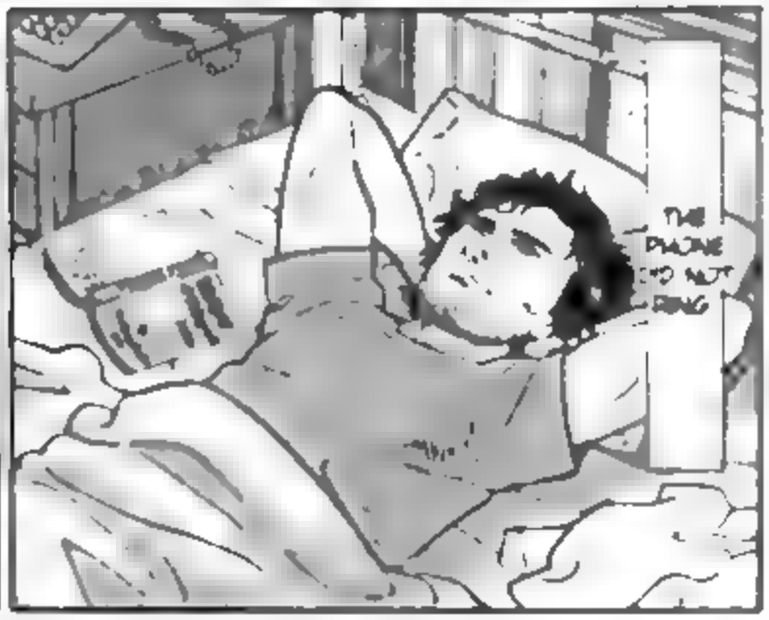
IT'S NOT A PALACE WELL GUARDED LIKE YOU CAN FIND IN JAPAN
THEN, HE JUST NEEDED TO BRIBE A BOY OR A CHAMBERMAID. NOTHING MORE EASY FOR MANI KUMAR.

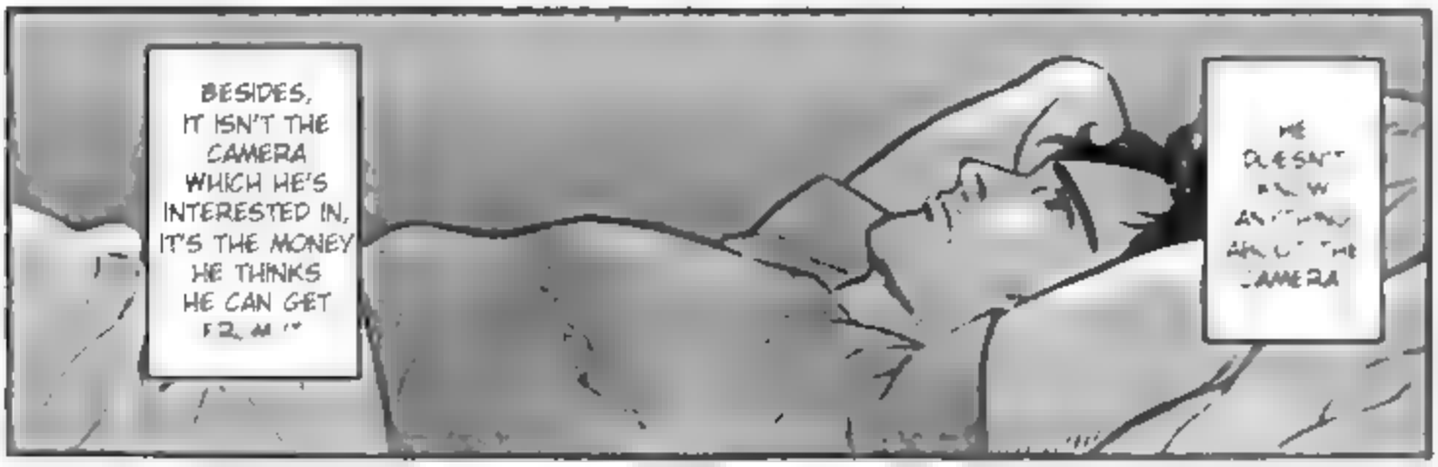
I DON'T HAVE ANY PROOF ...
IT'S NOT LIKELY THAT WAY I'LL BE ABLE TO GET BACK THE CAMERA ...

I COULD DECLARE THE THEFT TO THE POLICE, BUT ...

IT'S JUST A ESTABLISHMENT WITH A SANITARY SYSTEM AND WITH BADLY MAINTAINED SHOWERS

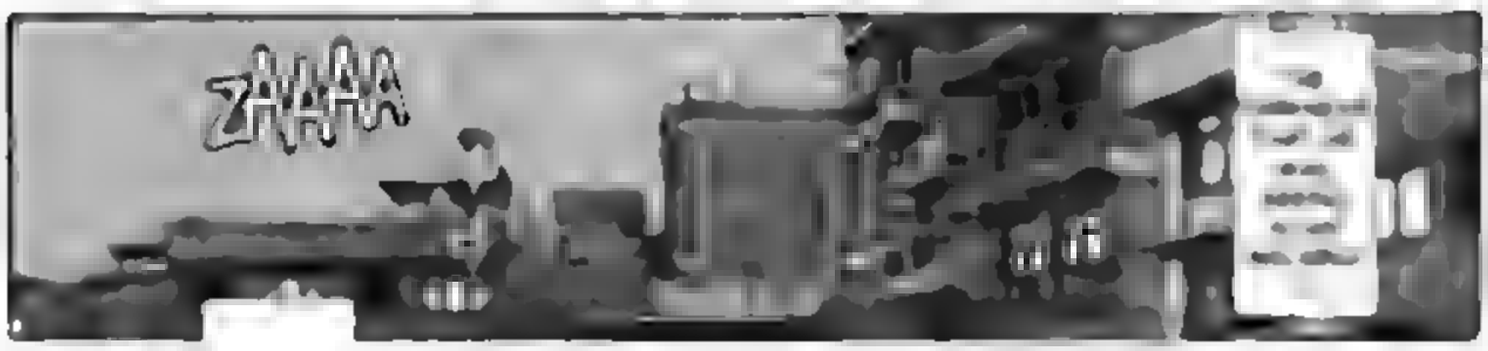

THE NIGHT HAS BEEN LONG
ZAAAAA


THE PHONE DID NOT RING


BESIDES, IT ISN'T THE CAMERA WHICH HE'S INTERESTED IN, IT'S THE MONEY HE THINKS HE CAN GET

THE Mystery of Mallory

ZAHAA


ZAHAA

DEPTHS OF
HIMSELF.

Fuccccccccsh!!!

GO AHEAD, SINCE YOU'RE SO EAGER ABOUT IT
YOU'RE FREE TO DO AS YOU WISH!
LIVE YOUR LIFE AS YOU WISH, I CAN'T ASK FOR MORE!
LIKE THAT, ME TOO, I'LL LIVE MINE AS I WISH. IT'S
INTO HIS BED, BUT HIS SLEEP WAS LIGHT, STICKY.

FUKAMACHI DIDN'T LEAVE HIS ROOM ALL DAY LONG.

SHAAAA

THE NEXT DAY, IT WAS RAINING.

BUT COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING
HE SEARCHED FOR LONG ...

THE Mystery of Mallory and Irvine

THE PHONE RANG AT 3PM
BROOOOM

THE RAIN STOPPED AND THE SKY BECAME CLEARER.

NAMASTE !

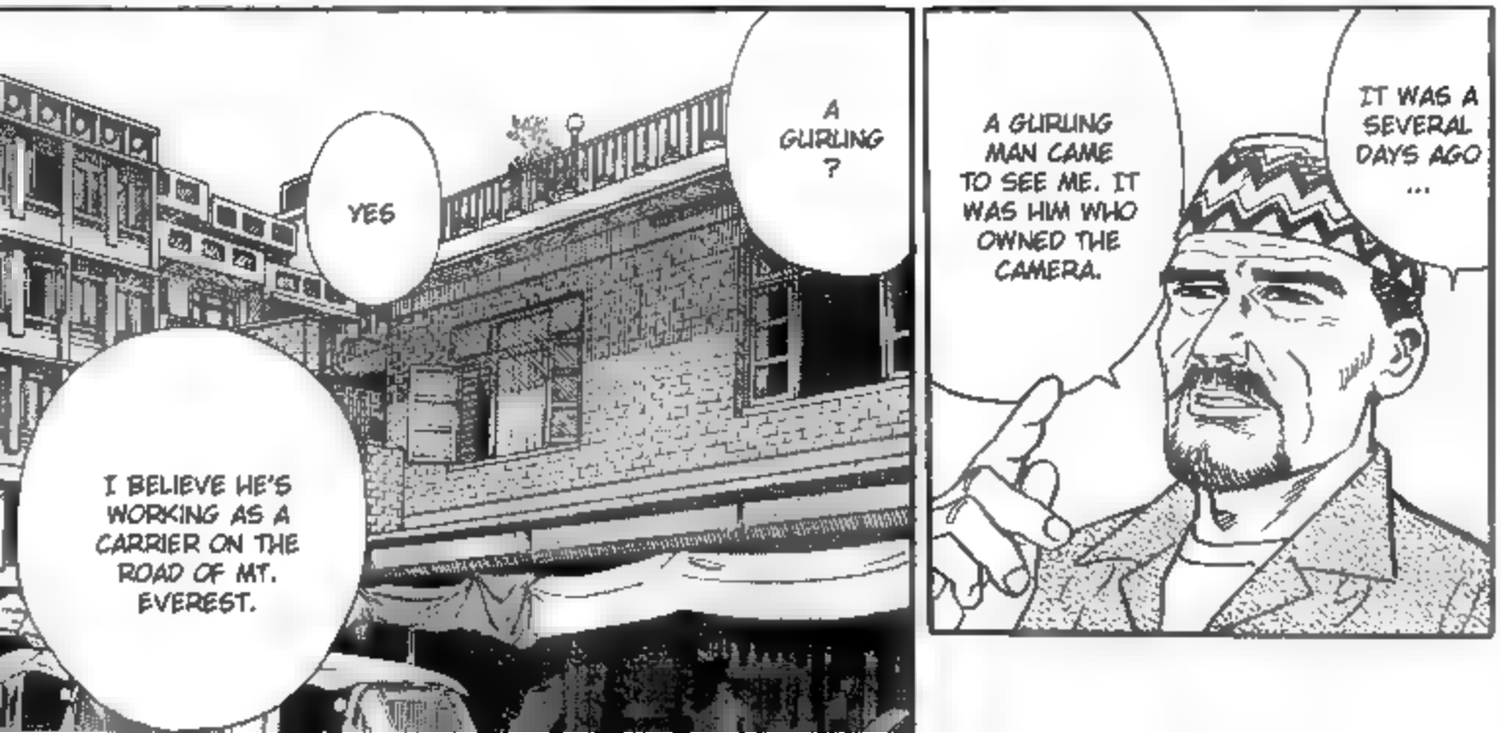
WHAT? YOU'RE LEAVING ?
I'M GLAD THAT YOU CALLED ME BEFORE I WENT BACK TO JAPAN!
AH!

YES.
DID YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING ?
TAKE A SEAT.

IN THAT CASE ...
YES. I THOUGHT I HAD TO LEAVE KATHMANDU WITHOUT ANY NEWS FROM YOU.
THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE.

THIS MAN IS NARADAR RASENDRA
HE OFTEN BRINGS ME HIS DISCOVERIES ■ ORDER FOR ME TO RESELL THEM.

THEN, COULD YOU EXPLAIN ME HOW THIS CAMERA ENDED UP IN YOUR CUSTODY ?
REALLY ?
IT'S HIM WHO BROUGHT ME THAT CAMERA
TO TELL THE TRUTH ...


A GURUNG ?
YES
I BELIEVE HE'S WORKING AS A CARRIER ON THE ROAD OF MT. EVEREST.
A GURUNG MAN CAME TO SEE ME. IT WAS HIM WHO OWNED THE CAMERA.
IT WAS A SEVERAL DAYS AGO ...

KOTAMA SAID...
... THAT SOMEONE GAVE IT TO HIM.

HE CAME TO SELL ME VARIOUS OBJECTS
DID HE TELL YOU HOW HE GOT IT ?
WITH THEM, THERE WAS THIS OLD CAMERA.

A JAPANESE ?
IT WAS A JAPANESE LIKE YOU ...
APPARENTLY ...

YES.
GAVE IT?

BUT HE COMES UP TO HERE TO WORK
SINCE HE DIDN'T HAVE A WORK THERE, HE DECIDED TO COME TO KATHMANDU TO BE A CARRIER.
IS THAT SO ?
IT MEANS THAT HE'S HERE?

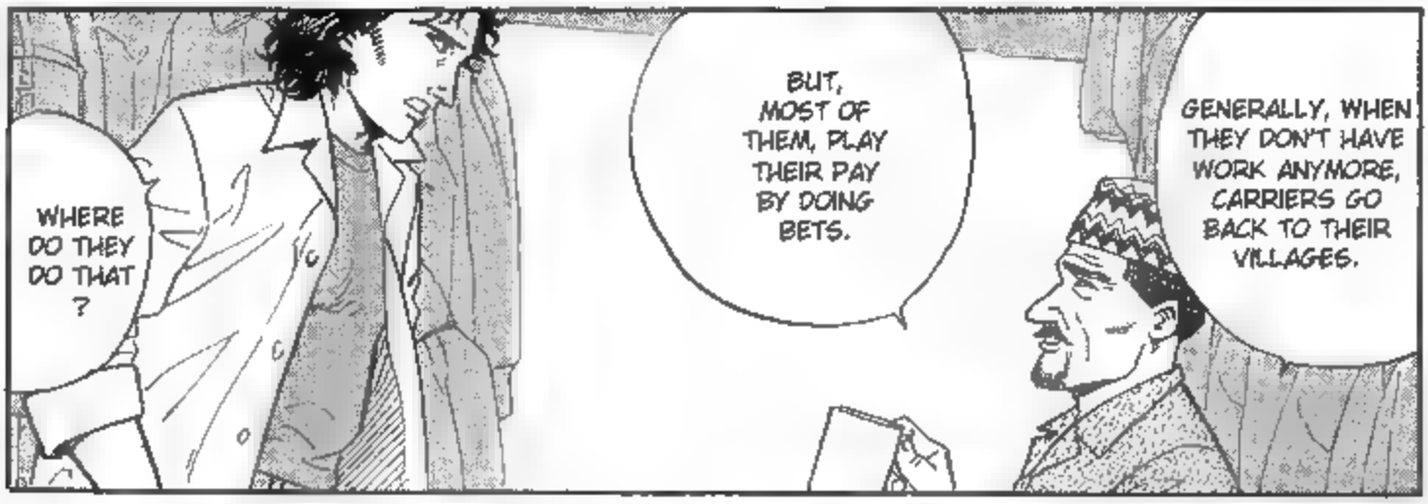
I DON'T KNOW
WHAT'S HIS NAME ?

SHIVA EXPORTS PACKERS & MOVERS
I MUST MEET THIS KOTAMA. WHERE DOES HE LIVE?
HIS HOUSE IS AT POKHARA.
SHIVA

WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?
HE'S MOST LIKELY PLAYING HIS MONEY.
IT'S CLOSE.

TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND HIM.

CERTAINLY

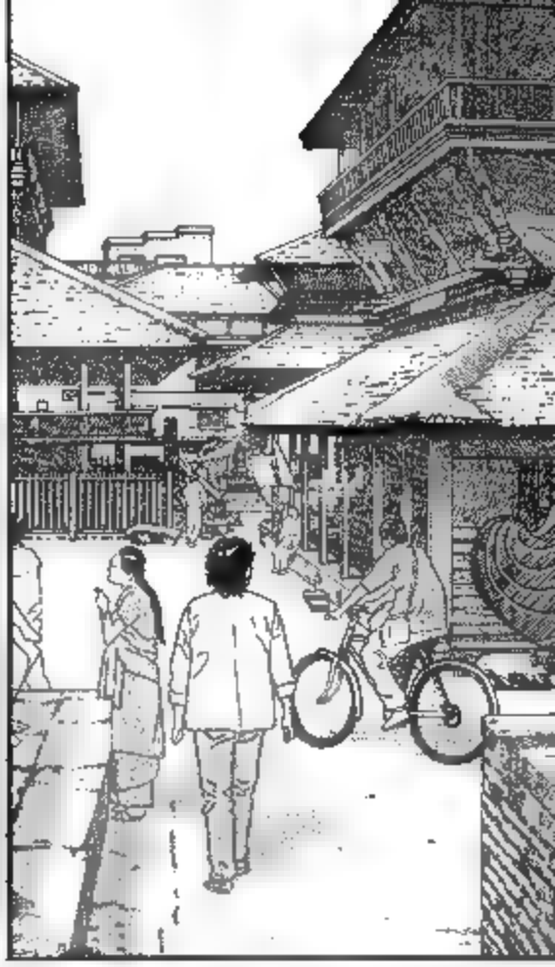

WHERE DO THEY DO THAT ?
BUT, MOST OF THEM, PLAY THEIR PAY BY DOING BETS.
GENERALLY, WHEN THEY DON'T HAVE WORK ANYMORE, CARRIERS GO BACK TO THEIR VILLAGES.

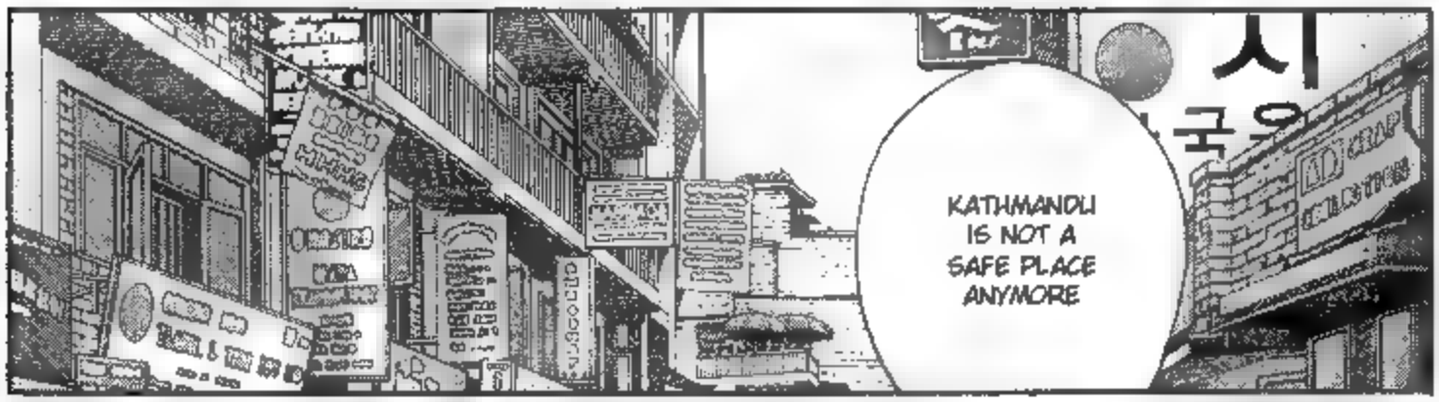
WELL, GENERALLY ...
THEY SET UP THEMSELVES UNDER THE OVER-HAND OF SHIVA AND PARVATI'S TEMPLE, ON DURBAR PLACE.

IF YOU DON'T FIND HIM THERE ...
ASK WHERE YOU CAN FIND HIM, SOMEONE WILL CERTAINLY BE ABLE TO TELL YOU.

DIDN'T THEY TALK A LITTLE BIT TOO SPONTANEOUSLY ?
WHAT ARE THEY UP TO ?

MANI KUMAR AND NARADAR RASENDRA ...

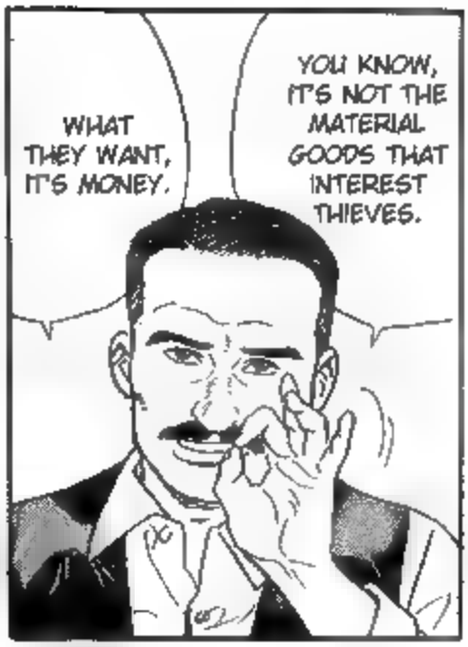



KATHMANDU IS NOT A SAFE PLACE ANYMORE

IF IT'S NOT MONEY BUT AN OBJECT THAT WAS STOLEN FROM YOU. I MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU TO FIND IT.

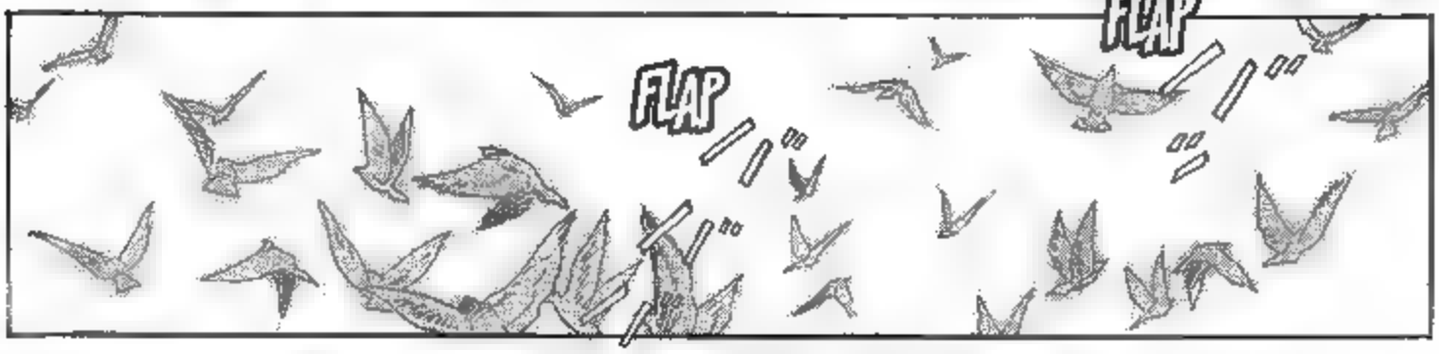
IT SEEMS LIKE THERE ARE MORE AND MORE THIEVES.
...

I THINK I KNOW WHO TO ASK TO INFILTRATE THIS CLANDESTINE MARKET.
THEY STEAL OBJECTS ONLY BECAUSE THEY CAN GET MONEY IN EXCHANGE.


WHAT THEY WANT, IT'S MONEY.
YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT THE MATERIAL GOODS THAT INTEREST THIEVES.

I SHALL REMEMBER IT.

...
SOME STOLEN OBJECTS END UP IN MY SHOP ...
EVEN SOME-TIMES, IT HAPPENS THAT ...


FLAP
FLAP

HMM?
DO YOU KNOW IF KOTAMA IS HERE ?
UTHA."

SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOU

"OVER THERE

EXCUSE ME...
WHICH ONE OF YOU IS KOTAMA ?

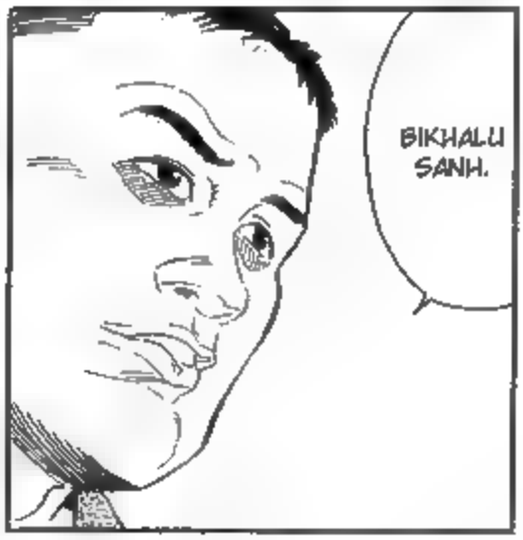
Y... YES ...
I HAVE FEW QUESTIONS TO ASK TO YOU ABOUT AN OLD CAMERA THAT YOU SOLD TO NARADAR RASENDRA.
YOU DID SAY THAT IT WAS A JAPANESE WHO GAVE IT TO YOU?

...
IT'S YOU, KOTAMA ?
SAY ...

CAN YOU TELL ME HIS NAME ?

NO. NO.
DO YOU KNOW HIM ? WAS IT HIM WHO ASKED YOU TO COME ?

I DON'T KNOW IT.
BUT HIS JAPANESE NAME?
BIKHALU SANH?


BIKHALU SANH.

OK.
I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING, BUT NOT HERE, LET'S GO TALK SOMEWHERE ELSE.

INDEED.

...
I DON'T KNOW HIM BY ANY OTHER NAME.
EVERYBODY CALLED HIM BIKHALU SANH.

IT'S THIS CAMERA WHICH INTERESTED YOU, RIGHT ?
HMM ...

PWAAH !!!
I'M LISTENING.
TELL ME ABOUT THIS JAPANESE, AND WHY HE GAVE YOU THIS CAMERA.

GLOUB GLOUB

RESTRANT PUB

WHY ARE YOU SO INTERESTED IN SUCH AN ANTIQUITY ?
WHAT IS THIS OLD CAMERA SO SPECIAL TO YOU?

EXPLAIN WHAT ?
I AGREE, BUT FIRST, I'D LIKE YOU TO EXPLAIN.
YES.

HE WAS TRYING TO FIND OUT THE SECRET OF THE CAMERA
KOTAMA WAS WORKING WITH THE TWO OTHERS.

EVERY-THING BECAME CLEAR FOR FUKA-MICHI

THE INSTANT KOTAMA ASKED THIS QUESTION ...

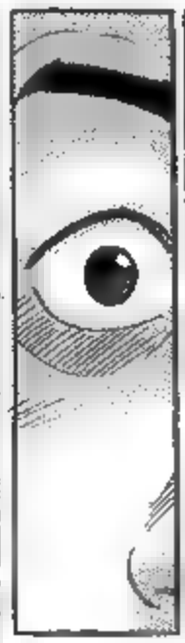
ANSWER NOW.
I ASKED YOU A QUESTION FIRST.

EVERYTHING IS CLEAR NOW, THAT'S WHY MANI KUMAR AND NARADAR RASENDRA TOLD EVERY-THING SO SPONTANEOUSLY

THAT, YOU'LL HAVE IT AFTER ANSWERING MY QUESTION !
BAM
...

IF I TALK, YOU'LL TELL ME, RIGHT ?
ALL RIGHT.

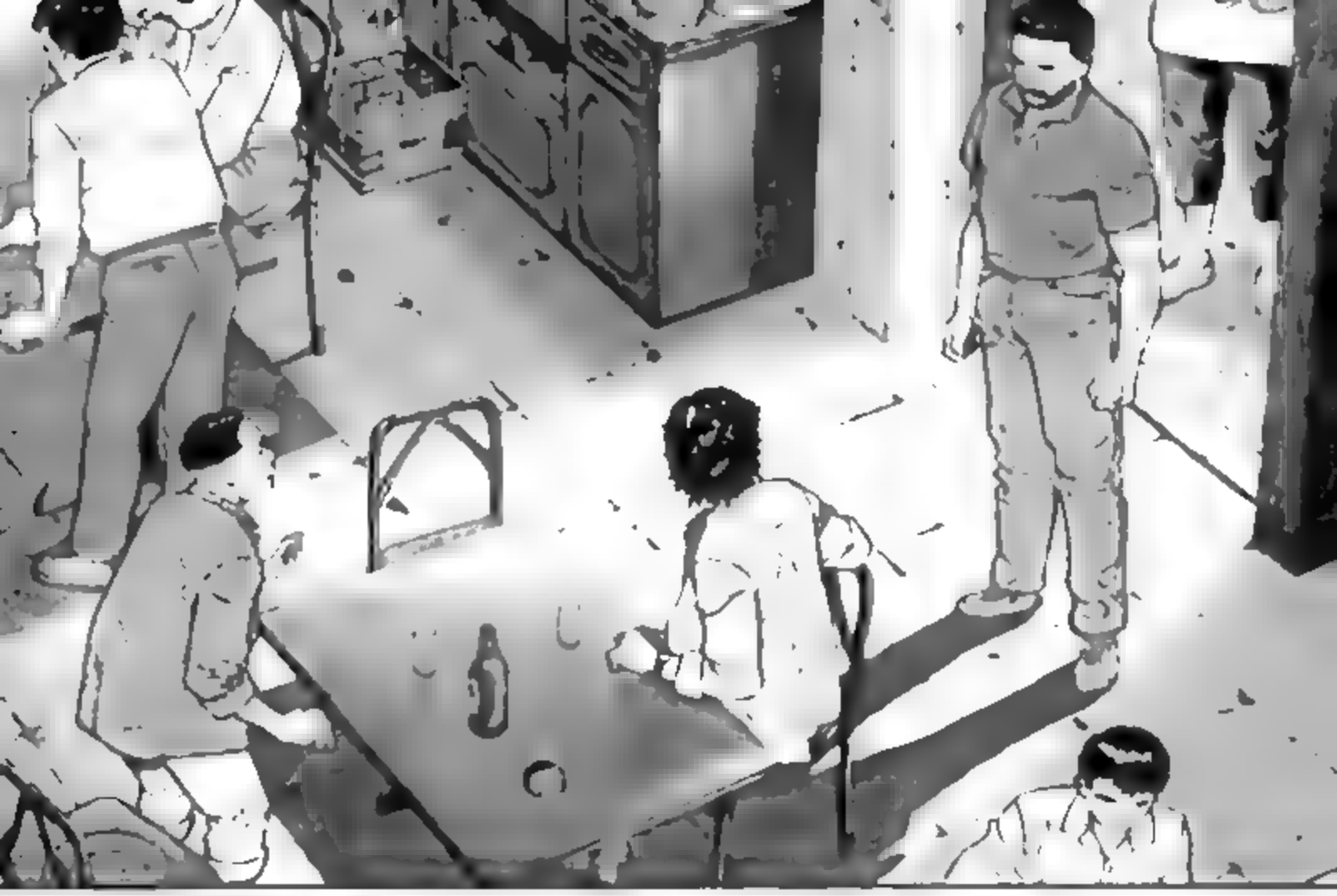
DOM



WHAT I WANT TO KNOW, IS WHO IS THIS "BIKHALU SANH" AND WHERE DOES HE LIVE!
THAT, I UNDER-STAND.
WELL, I TOLD YOU, SOMEONE GAVE IT TO ME.

...
SUDDENLY A MUSKY SMELL FILLED THE ROOM
WHAT'S GOING ON?

BIKHALU SANH...
THE MAN WHO WAS NICKNAMED "THE POISONOUS SNAKE" WAS STANDING HERE.



MAY I ?

OF COURSE GO AHEAD
I HAVE TO TALK WITH THIS MAN.
IT WAS WITH A DETACHED ACCENT THAT HE SPOKE THOSE FEW WORDS. HIS VOICE WAS LOW BUT IT WAS INDEED IN CONFIDENT JAPANESE THAT HE EXPRESSED HIMSELF.

*AROUND 60 EUROS / 45 USD

WHERE DID YOU GO? "SHAKTI" ?

N... NO, I ...
IT WAS A WISE MERCHANT THAT YOU DEALT WITH.
THE CAMERA, THE COWBELLS AND THE STATUETTES ONLY FOR 3000 RUPEES ?

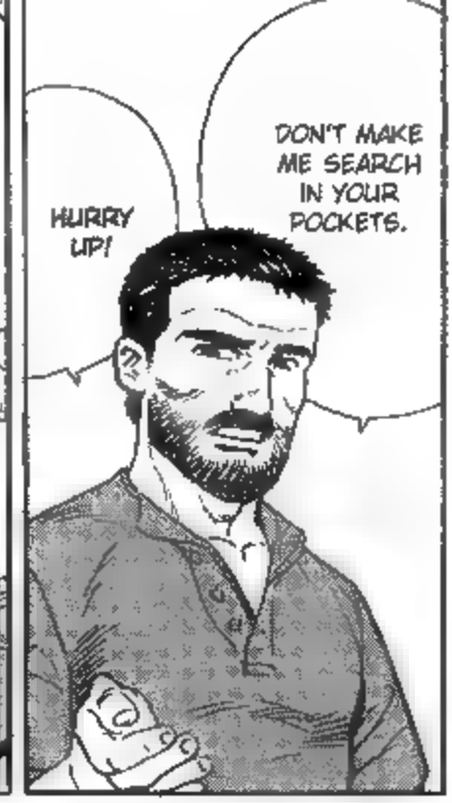
AH ...
IT LOOKS LIKE I'VE GUESSED RIGHT.
HUM!

"SAGARMATHA" ?
OR...

HOW MUCH DO YOU HAVE WITH YOU NOW? SHOW ME!

BE MERCIFUL, DON'T DO THAT TO ME ...
UUH ...
SO YOU REALLY WENT TO SEE MANI KUMAR ...

IT SEEMED LIKE YOU WERE LUCKY AT GAMES THIS TIME.
PFFF ...
TOO BAD. YOU SHOULD HAVE GONE BACK TO POKHARA AS SOON AS YOU COULD.


DON'T MAKE ME SEARCH IN YOUR POCKETS.
HURRY UP!

HE TRIED TO REMEMBER.

FUKAMICHI HAD THE FEELING THAT HE KNEW THIS MAN.

I GIVE YOU BACK THE REMAINING MONEY.

THERE.
3000 RUPEES
HE HAD THE FEELING THAT HE SAW HIM SOME-WHERE, A LONG TIME AGO ...

I HOPE THAT ALL THE OBJECTS THAT YOU STOLE ARE STILL WITH MANI KUMAR!
GOOD!
...

...
I DON'T THINK SO.
ALAS ...

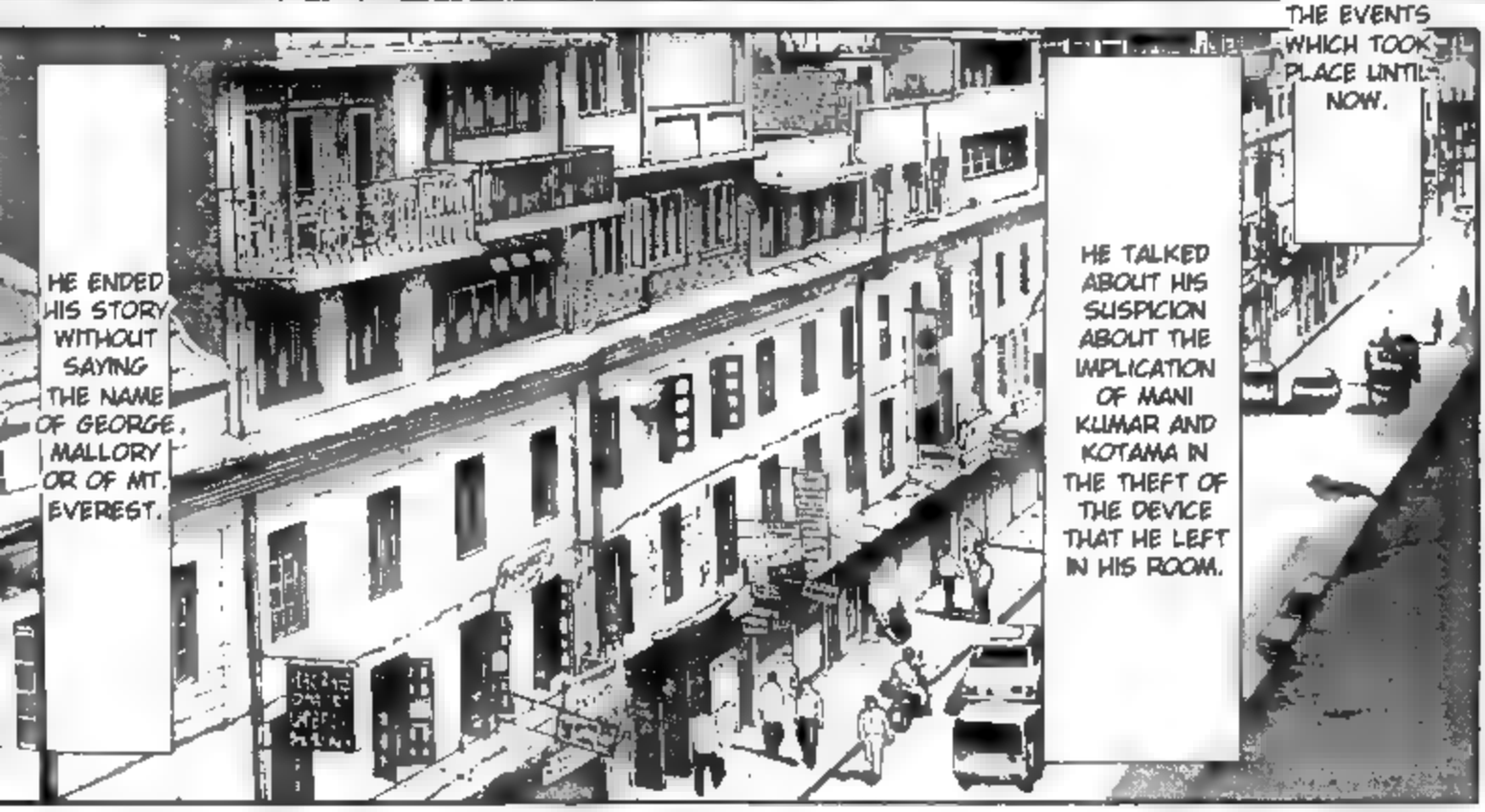
A VEST POCKET AUTOMATIC KODAK SPECIAL.

...
WHAT ■ SURE, IT'S THAT THE CAMERA IS NOT IN THE SAGARMARTHA ANYMORE.
FOR THE COWBELLS AND THE STATUETTES, I DON'T KNOW, BUT ...

I MADE A SMALL INVESTI-GATION.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT MUCH ?

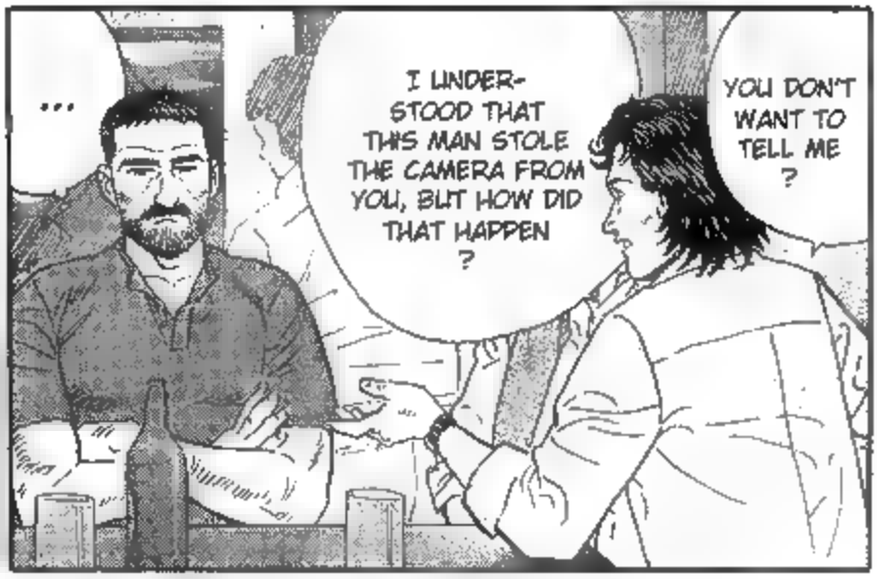
A MODEL MARKETED IN 1924.

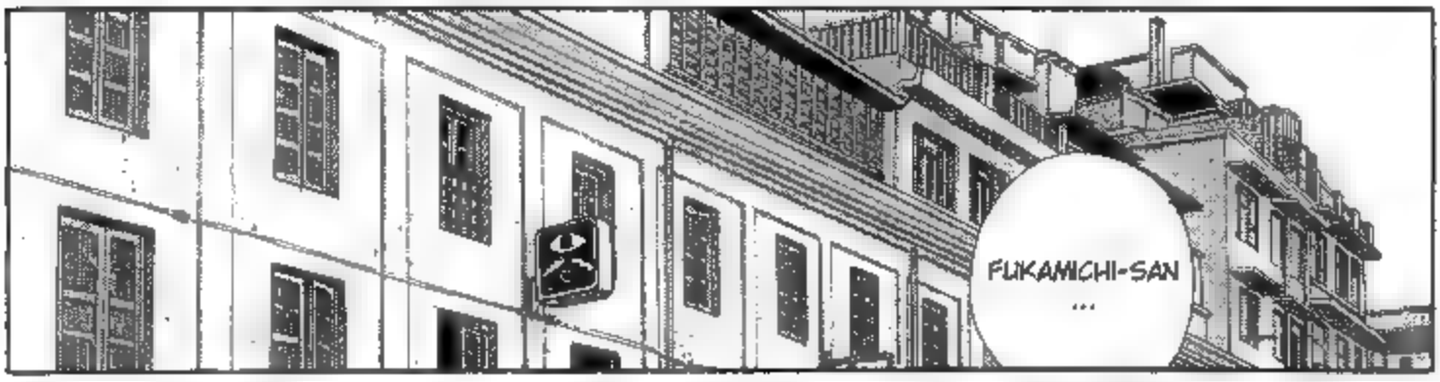
...
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS CAMERA BELONGS TO YOU.
MY NAME IS FUKA-MICHI.

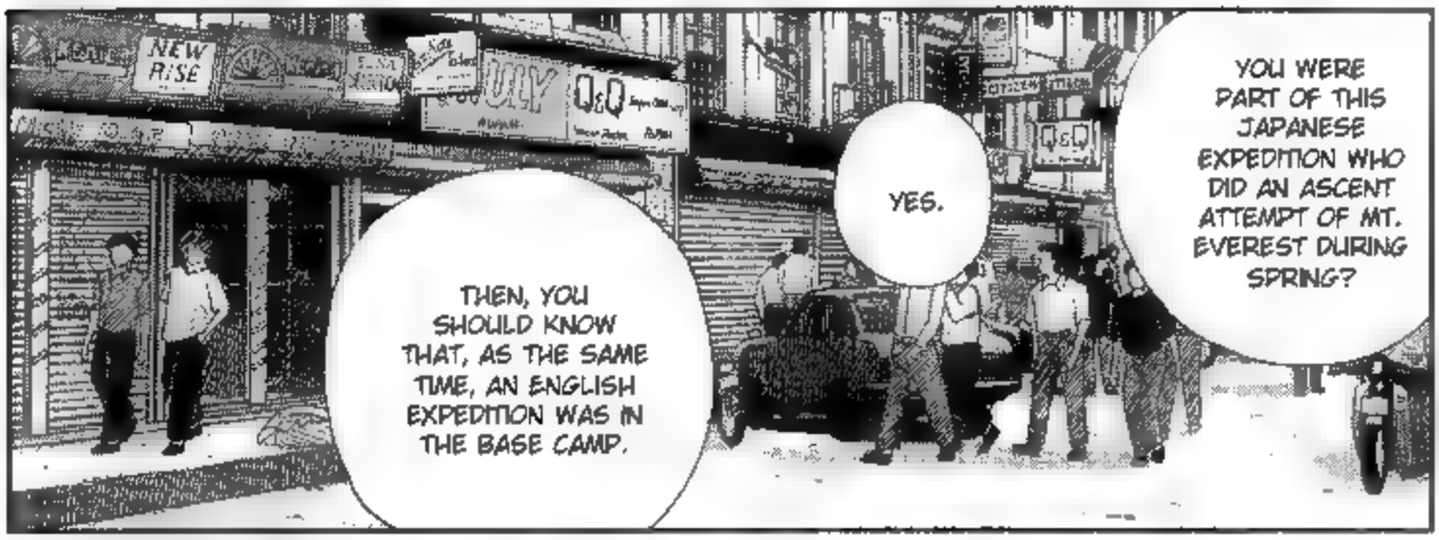

FUKAMICHI BRIEFLY SUMMARISED THE EVENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE UNTIL NOW.
HE TALKED ABOUT HIS SUSPICION ABOUT THE IMPLICATION OF MANI KUMAR AND KOTAMA IN THE THEFT OF THE DEVICE THAT HE LEFT IN HIS ROOM.
HE ENDED HIS STORY WITHOUT SAYING THE NAME OF GEORGE MALLORY OR OF MT. EVEREST.

THE ENTIRE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE IN JAPANESE.

THUS, IT'S FOR THAT, THAT YOU'RE HERE.
I SEE.

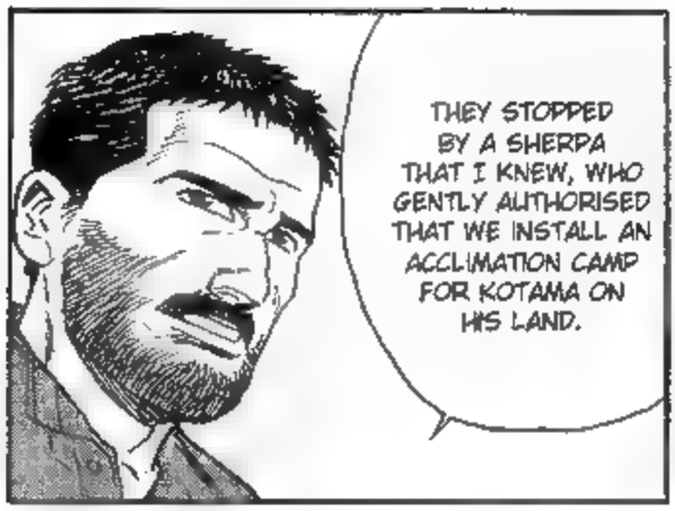

...
I UNDER-STOOD THAT THIS MAN STOLE THE CAMERA FROM YOU, BUT HOW DID THAT HAPPEN ?
YOU DON'T WANT TO TELL ME ?


FUKAMICHI-SAN ...

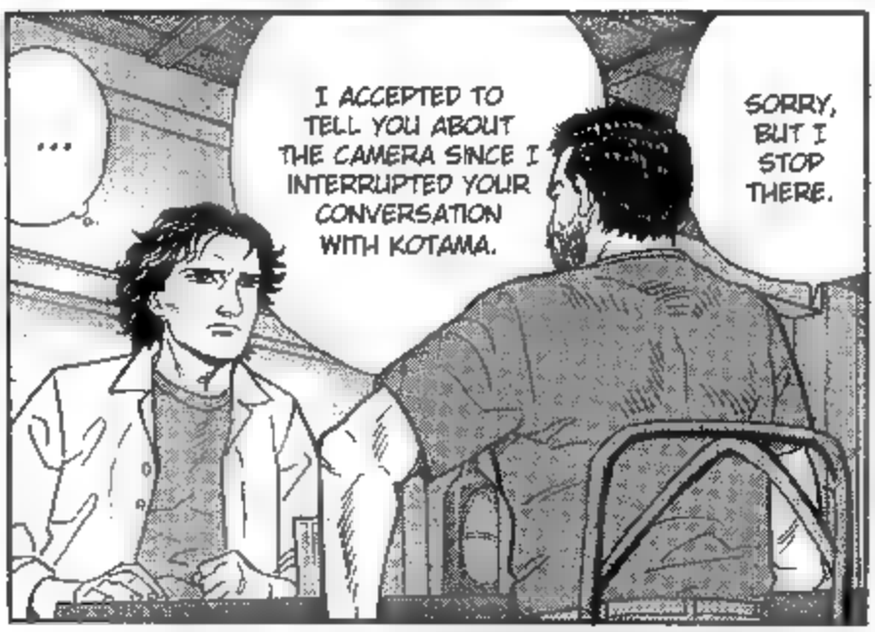

NEW RISE
Q&Q
THEN, YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT, AS THE SAME TIME, AN ENGLISH EXPEDITION WAS IN THE BASE CAMP.
YES.
YOU WERE PART OF THIS JAPANESE EXPEDITION WHO DID AN ASCENT ATTEMPT OF MT. EVEREST DURING SPRING?

EXACTLY.
KOTAMA WAS AMONG THE CARRIERS WHO WERE CALLED IN AS REINFORCEMENTS TO BRING BACK DOWN ENGLISH'S EQUIPMENT.
THEY GOT BACK FROM THE CAMP AROUND 5 DAYS BEFORE US.

THEY ALSO FAILED.
INDEED.



*THE MOST EXPERIENCED OF THE SHERPA

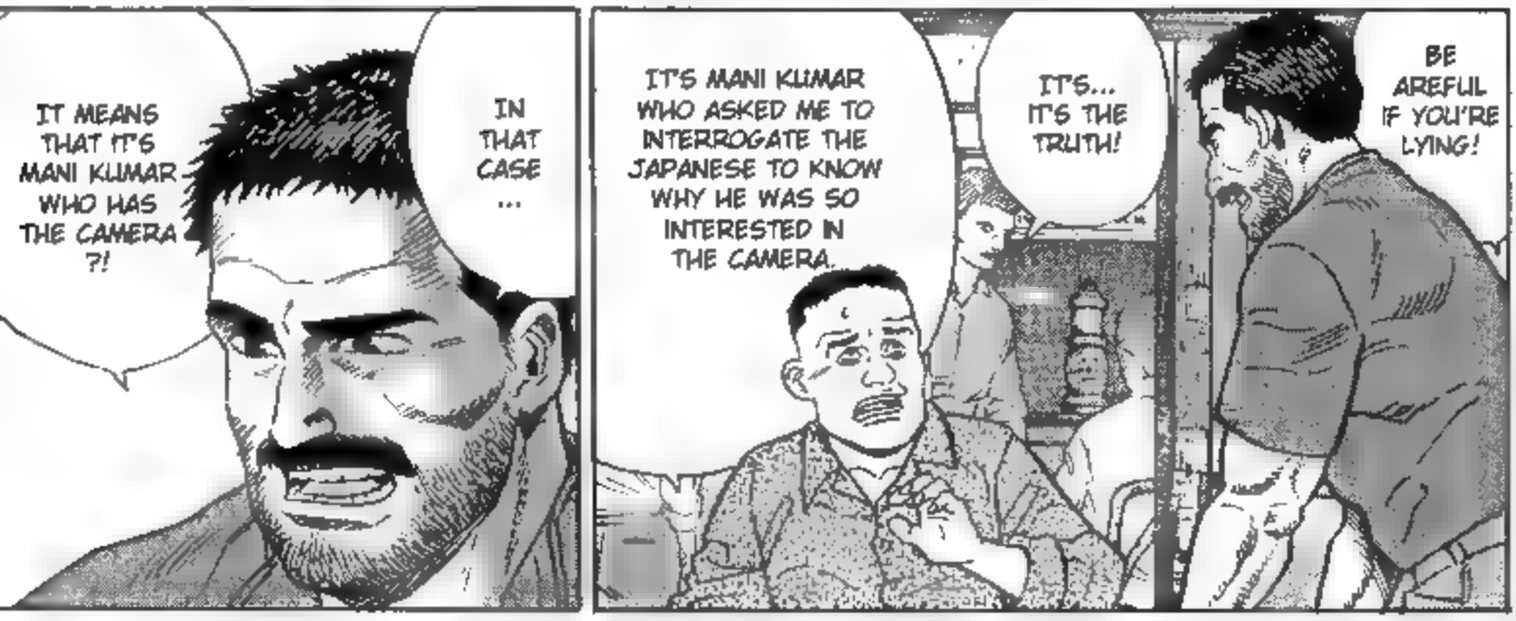


BUT HE NEVER MET HIM BEFORE
FUKAMACHI WAS SURE HE KNEW THIS MAN

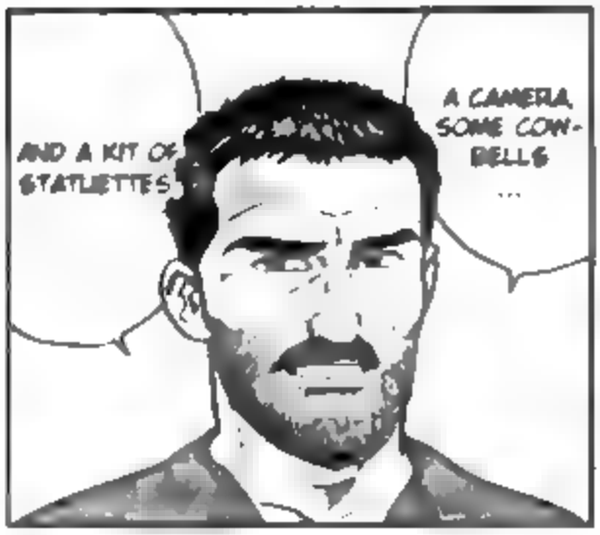
HE FELT, THAT SOMEWHERE IN HIS MEMORY, A THREAD WAS ABOUT TO BECOME LOOSE

UNLESS IT WAS ON A PHOTO
HE HAD LIKELY SEEN HIM FROM FAR
SOMEWHERE

IT'S MANI KUMAR, HE PAID SOMEONE FROM THE HOTEL TO DO IT!
THE MAN IN FRONT OF YOU THREATENED TO COMPLAIN TO THE POLICE.
SPEAK, KOTAMA !
NO! I DID NOTHING !
HERE!
WHAT INTERESTS ME NOW, IS TO KNOW WHERE THE CAMERA IS!
EMPOR


IT MEANS THAT IT'S MANI KUMAR WHO HAS THE CAMERA ?!
IN THAT CASE ...
IT'S MANI KUMAR WHO ASKED ME TO INTERROGATE THE JAPANESE TO KNOW WHY HE WAS SO INTERESTED IN THE CAMERA.
IT'S... IT'S THE TRUTH!
BE AREFUL IF YOU'RE LYING!

STAND UP KOTAMA!
DIRECTION "SAGAMARTHA" !!
Y... YES ...
I THINK SO...

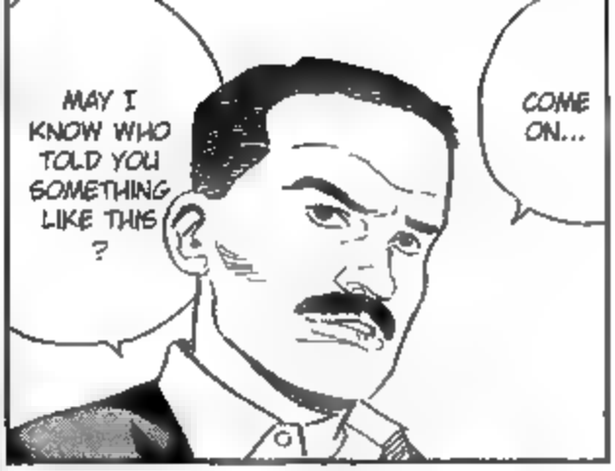

AND A KIT OF STATUETTES.
A CAMERA, SOME COW-BELLS ...

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BUY ?
VERY WELL, BUT ...
HERE'S SOME MONEY.

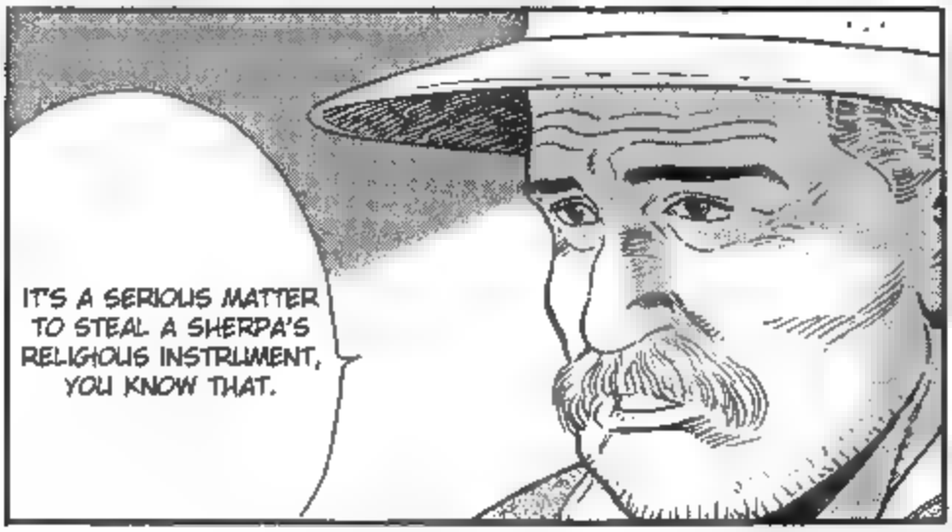
THEN, IT'S REALLY YOU WHO STOLE THE CAMERA IN MY ROOM, ISN'T IT ?!
EXCUSE ME... ?

I'LL SEE IF I HAVE SOMETHING WITH THAT PRICE.
GOOD.

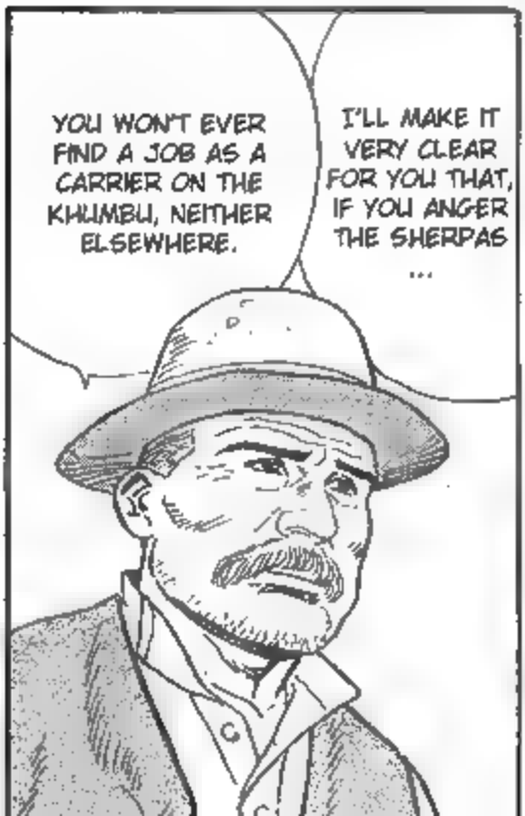
GO AHEAD, KOTAMA
I DON'T KNOW HIM.
YOU MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE.
REPEAT WHAT YOU SAID TO US FEW MINUTES AGO.

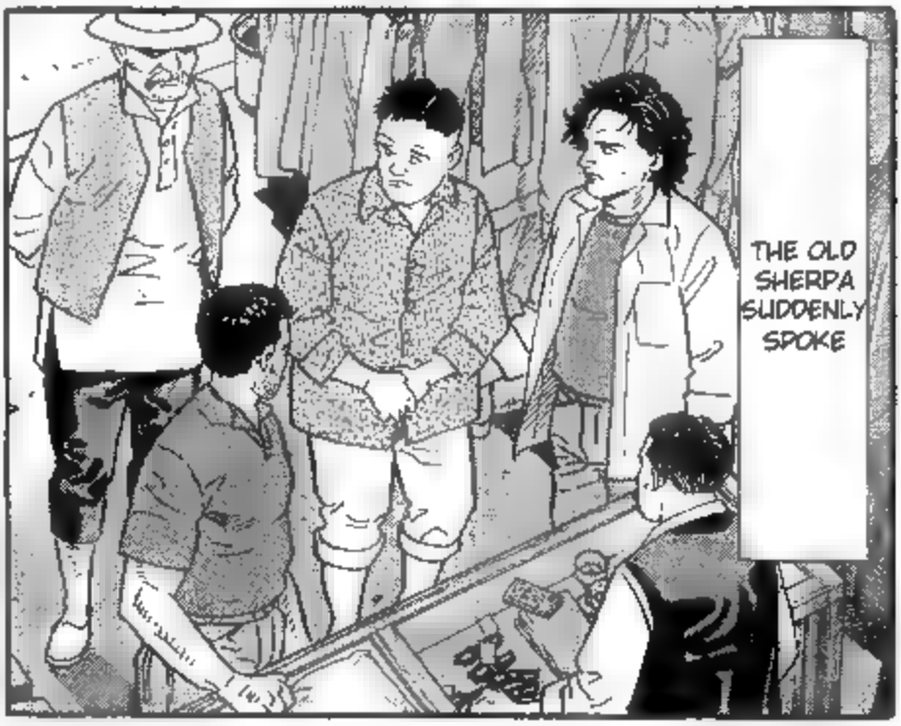

MAY I KNOW WHO TOLD YOU SOMETHING LIKE THIS ?
COME ON...

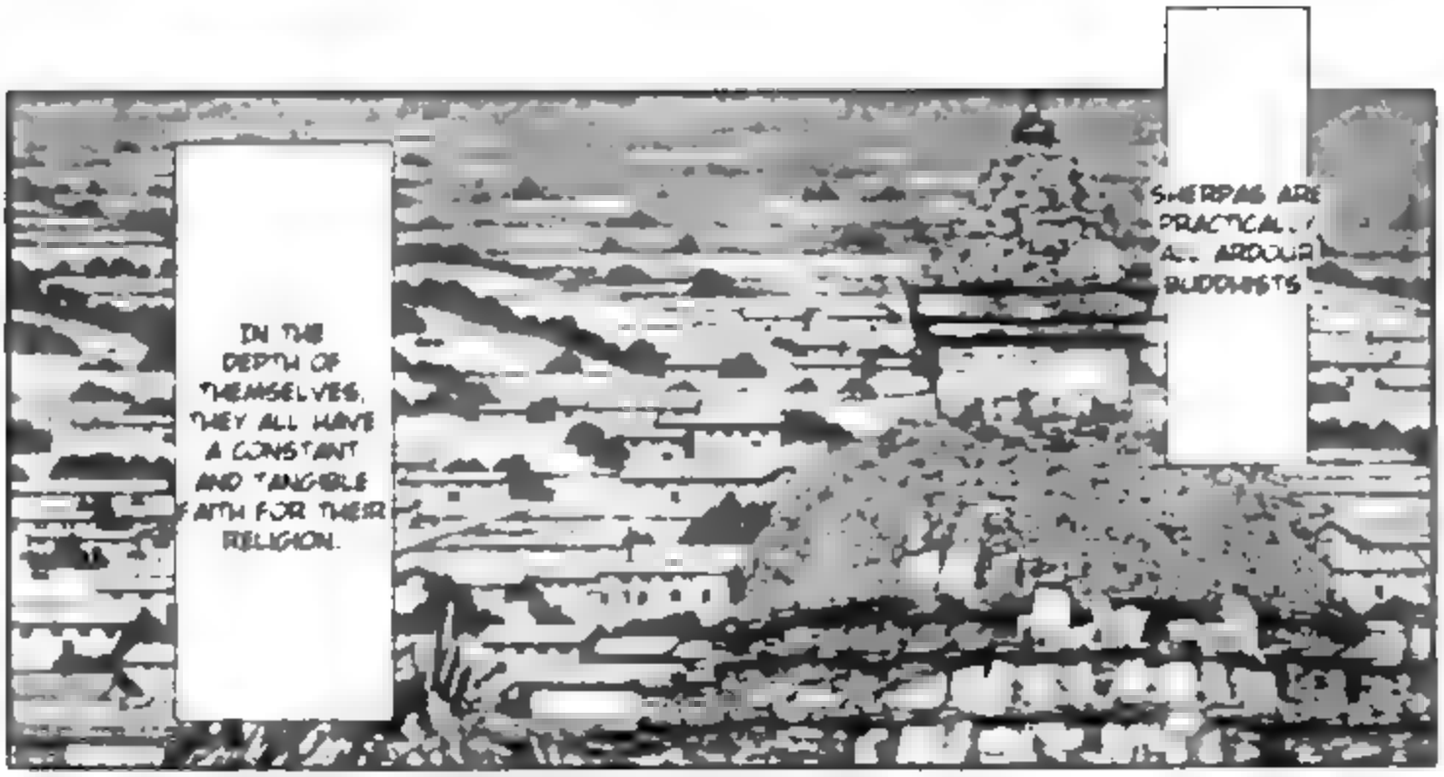
UH ...
HIM!

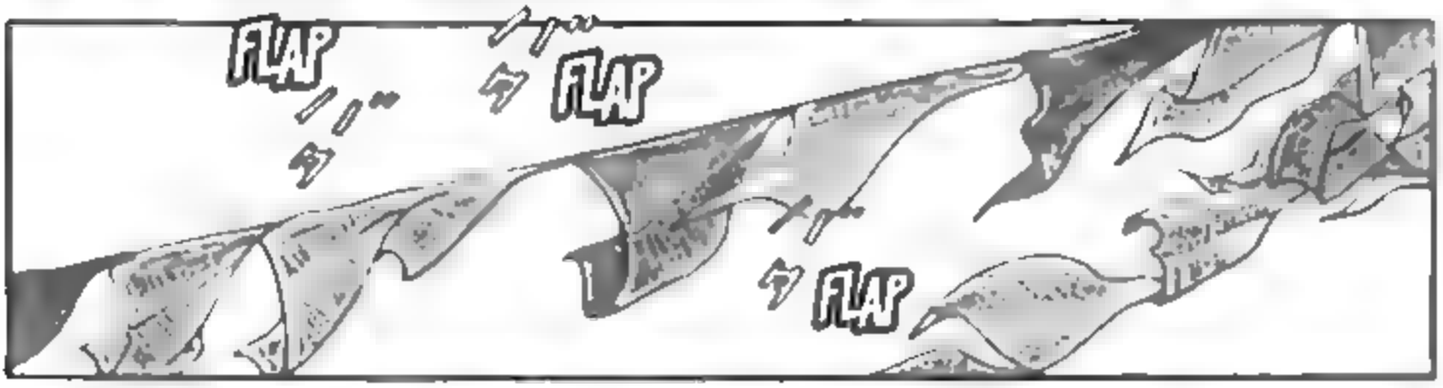

IT'S A SERIOUS MATTER TO STEAL A SHERPA'S RELIGIOUS INSTRUMENT, YOU KNOW THAT.

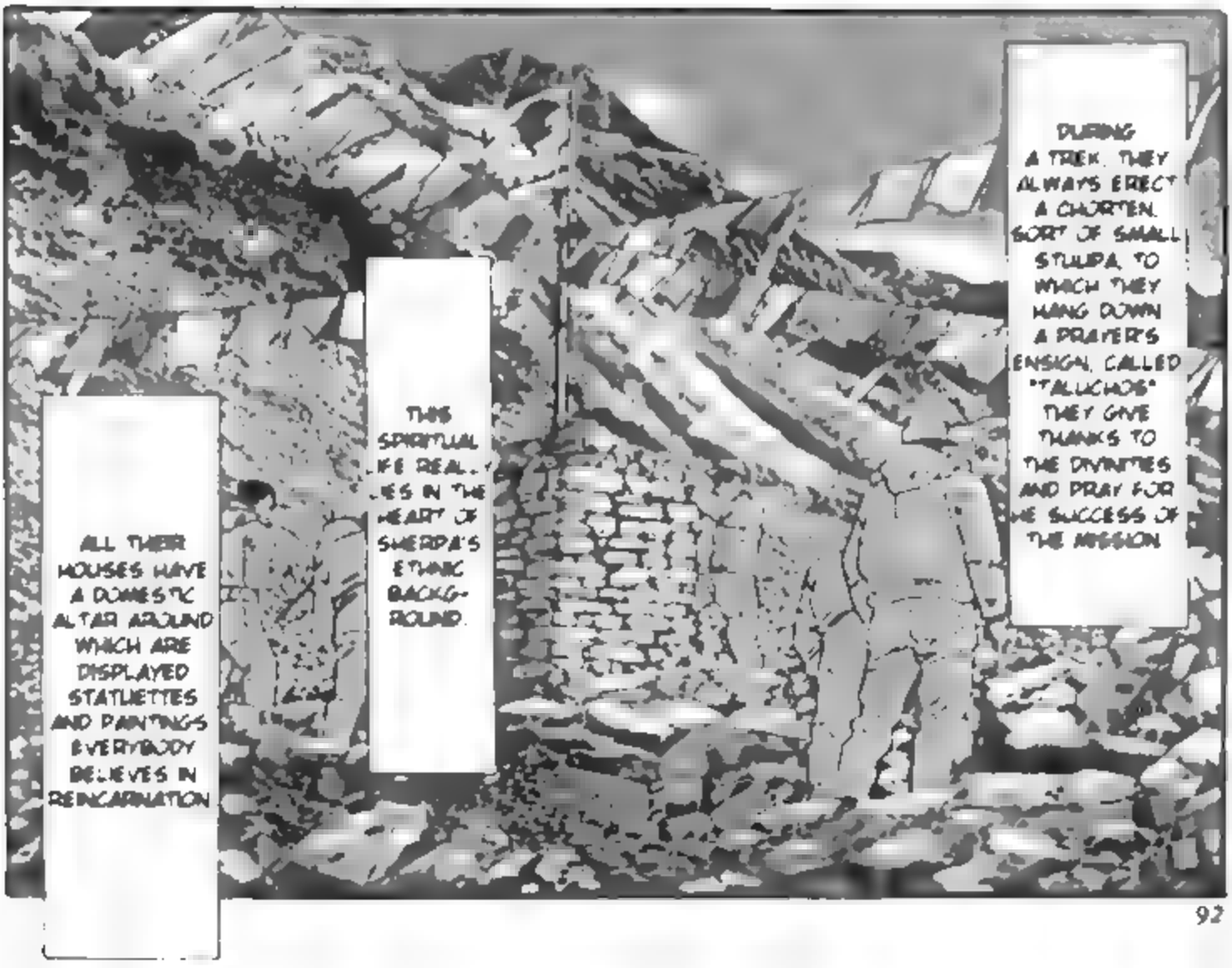
AHEM ...


YOU WON'T EVER FIND A JOB AS A CARRIER ON THE KHUMBU, NEITHER ELSEWHERE.
I'LL MAKE IT VERY CLEAR FOR YOU THAT, IF YOU ANGER THE SHERPAS ...

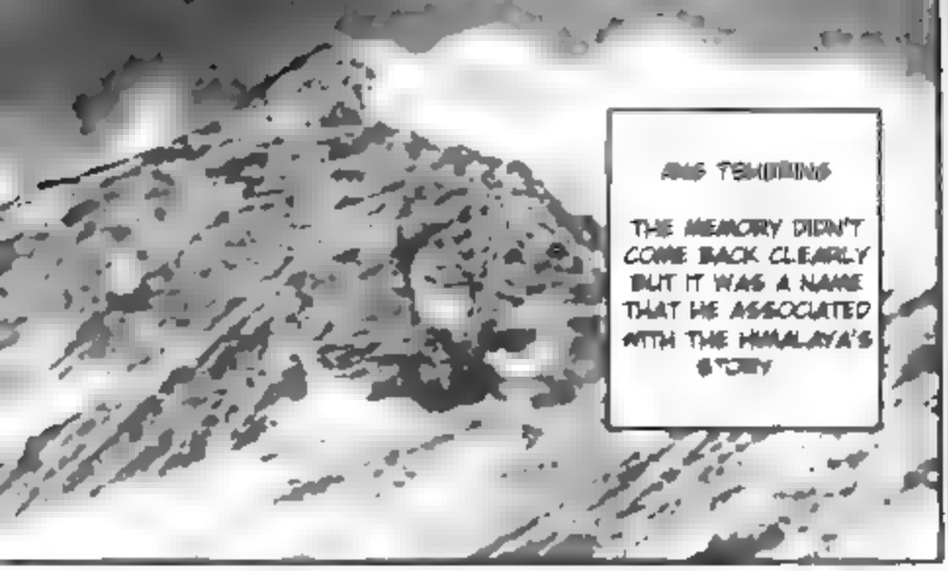

THE OLD SHERPA SUDDENLY SPOKE


IN THE DEPTH OF THEMSELVES, THEY ALL HAVE A CONSTANT AND TANGIBLE FAITH FOR THEIR RELIGION.
SHERPAS ARE PRACTICALLY ALL AROUND BUDDHISTS.


FLAP
FLAP
FLAP


ALL THEIR HOUSES HAVE A DOMESTIC ALTAR AROUND WHICH ARE DISPLAYED STATUETTES AND PAINTINGS. EVERYBODY BELIEVES IN REINCARNATION.
THIS SPIRITUAL LIFE REALLY LIES IN THE HEART OF SHERPA'S ETHNIC BACKGROUND.
DURING A TREK, THEY ALWAYS ERECT A CHORTEN, SORT OF SMALL STUPA, TO WHICH THEY HANG DOWN A PRAYER'S ENSIGN, CALLED "TALUCHOS". THEY GIVE THANKS TO THE DIVINITIES AND PRAY FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE MISSION.

A LANDSLIDE OF STONES COULD SWOOP DOWN ON YOU WHILE YOU WALK.
UNLESS A ROCK COLLAPSES UNDER YOUR FEET.
UUH ...
IF, BY CHANCE ...
SOME-ONE GIVES YOU A JOB, BE CAREFUL.
WHO IS THIS KIND PERSON ?
ERR ...
NO!
NOT THAT !
EITHER WAY ...
IT'LL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO BE A CARRIER IF THIS BUSINESS IS TAKEN BY THE POLICE.
ANG TSHERING ...
ANG TSHERING ...


ANG TSHERING
THE MEMORY DIDN'T COME BACK CLEARLY BUT IT WAS A NAME THAT HE ASSOCIATED WITH THE HIMALAYA'S STORY

IT WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME HE HEARD IT

WASN'T IT THE NAME OF A FAMOUS SHERPA WHO REACHED THE SUMMIT OF MT. EVEREST TWO TIMES AND MANY OTHER SUMMITS HIGHER THAN 8000 METERS ?

GIVE US WHAT WE CAME TO GET MAN KUMAR
UNLESS YOU PREFER THAT WE GO TO SEE THE POLICE WITH OUR FRIEND ?
...

MEANING ...

ANG TSHERING ...

OH OH! I'M FLATTERED !
YOU ARE ANG TSHERING ?
WHAT A JOY FOR AN OLD MAN THAT SOMEONE STILL REMEMBERS HIS NAME!

A MAN I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE CAME BY THIS MORNING.
HE WANTED TO SELL ME A LOT OF THINGS.
LIKE I PRESUMED THAT IT WAS STOLEN GOODS, I TOOK HIS KIT FOR A SMALL PRICE.

BUT YES !
I'M JUST RECALLING !

INCLUDING THE CAMERA THAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

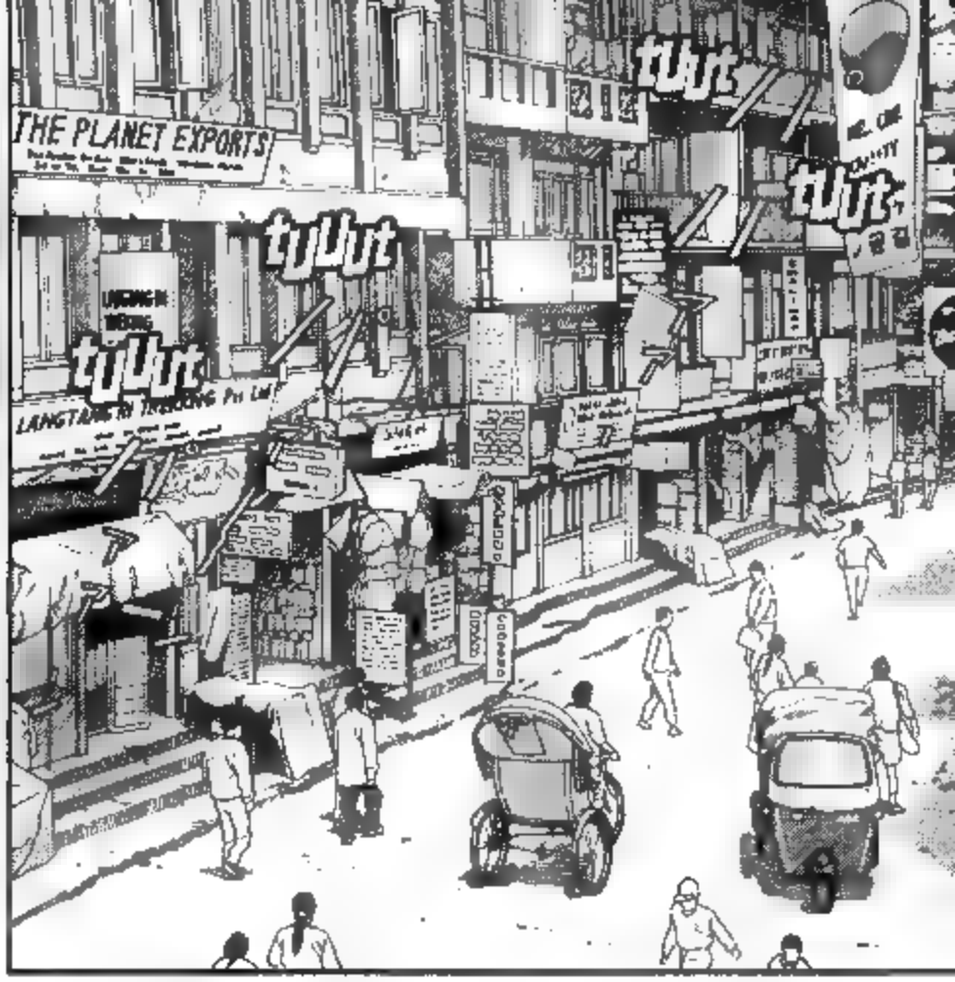
...
...IN THAT KIT, THERE'S WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
I BELIEVE THAT ...

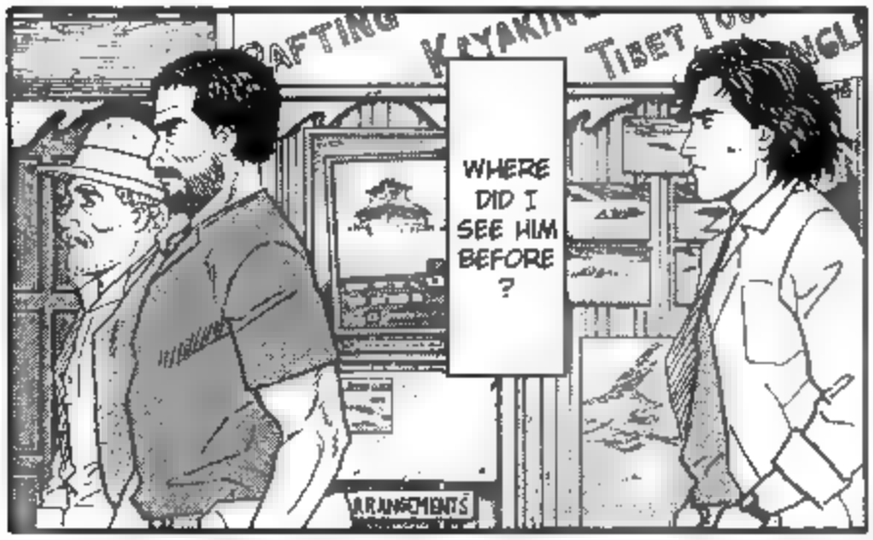
IS EVERY-THING THERE ?

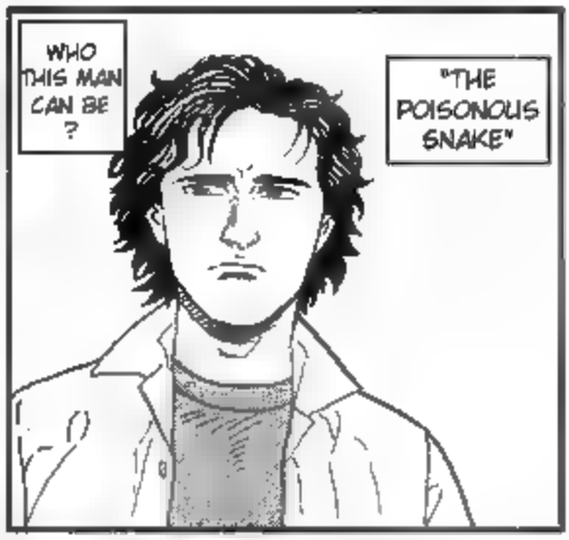
FLAP
THERE.
HE HE HE...

IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ?

FAX
EXPORTS


THE PLANET EXPORTS
tuuut
tuuut
tuuut
tuuut

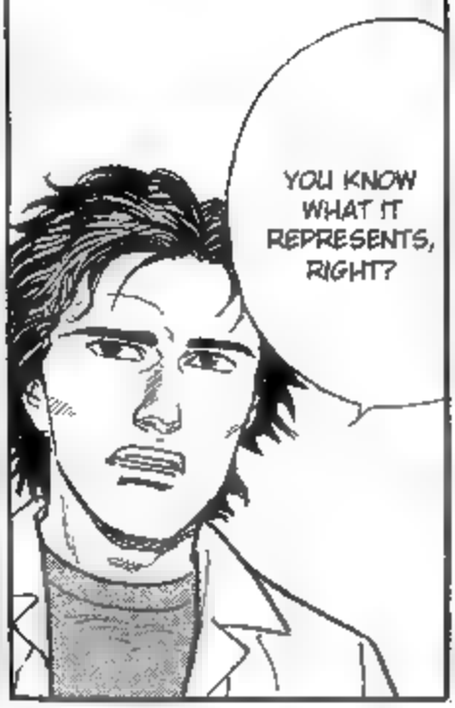

WHERE DID I SEE HIM BEFORE ?
ARRANGEMENTS

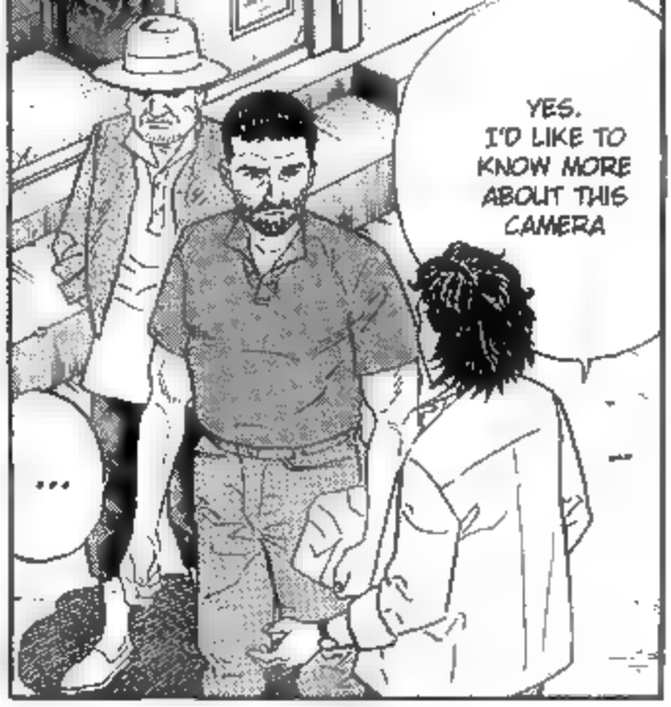

WHO THIS MAN CAN BE ?
"THE POISONOUS SNAKE"

I'D LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU

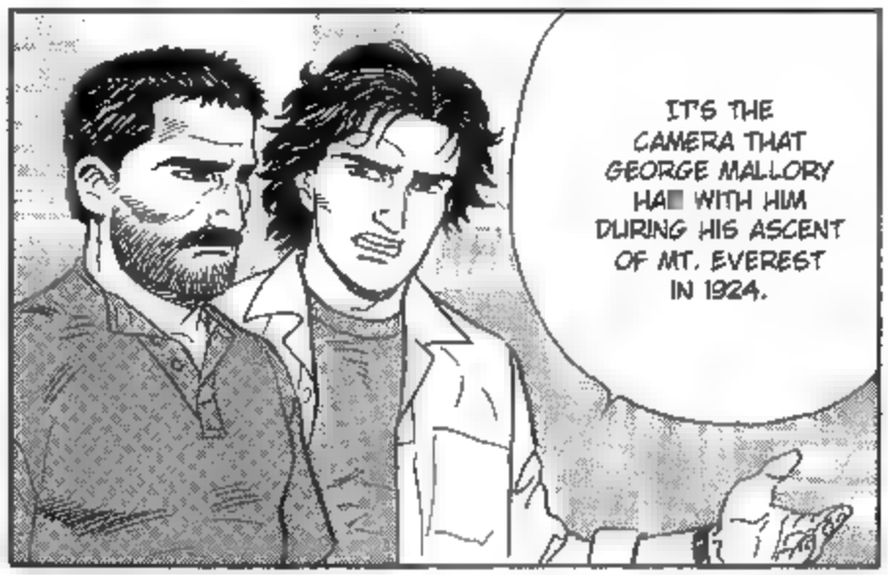
TALK ?

WHAT ABOUT DRINKING A BEER TOGETHER ?
SAY ...
...


YOU KNOW WHAT IT REPRESENTS, RIGHT?


YES. I'D LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS CAMERA
...

THAT'S NOT EXACTLY RIGHT.
WELL, NO.


IT'S THE CAMERA THAT GEORGE MALLORY HA■ WITH HIM DURING HIS ASCENT OF MT. EVEREST IN 1924.

tuuut
WELL, YOU'RE MISTAKEN.
LISTEN TO ME! IT'S INDEED MALLORY'S CAMERA ...
IT'S NOT IN KATMANDU THAT YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO FIND IT!
SUMER

...
THAT IT'S THE SAME MODEL AS MALLORY'S.
IT'S RATHER ...

YOU UNDER-STAND WHAT IT MEANS, I'M SURE.

MAYBE YOU MIGHT'VE FOUND IT YOURSELF ?

...
HOW DID YOU GET IT ?
TELL ME ...

THE FILM ?
YOU SHOULD KNOW WHERE THE FILM WHICH WAS INSIDE IS
IF IT'S YOU WHO DISCOVERED IT, THEN ...

...!
IF THAT WAS THE CASE ?

IT'S INDEED MALLORY'S CAMERA, RIGHT?
TELL ME! WHERE DID YOU FIND IT?
I DON'T KNOW.

YEAH!
TO DEVELOP THIS FILM COULD REWRITE THE WHOLE HIMALAYA'S HISTORY!
...

IT'S A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY !
WAIT, YOU DON'T REALIZE.
AND I DON'T HAVE ANY INTEREST IN THIS STUFF.

I'M TELLING YOU THAT I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT ?

...
FORGET WHAT HAPPENED TODAY, FORGET THIS CAMERA, AND STOP ASKING ME!
LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY, I REPEAT THE SAME THING AS MANI KUMAR

...
ZAAP

THAT'S ALL!
DON'T TRY TO UNDERSTAND. FORGET.

WHY ?

WHEN FUKAMICHI NOTICED IT ...

THIS LIMP ...
WHILE HE WAS GOING AWAY, THE MAN WAS DRAGGING HIS LEG WHILE WALKING.

ZAAP

THE MEMORY RETURNED TO HIM IMMEDIATELY.

ARE YOU REALLY HABU-SOLLI ?!
WAIT !!!

HABU-SAN! IS IT YOU ?!

BUT ...
HE DID NOT TURN BACK
ZAAAP
DURING THAT MOMENT, HE BELIEVED THAT HE SAW A SHIVER RUN ALONG THE SPINE OF BIKHALU-SAHIB
PHOTO COPY
HARU-JOUJI ...
WHAT IS HE DOING HERE, IN NEPAL ?

Scanned by vensu
Translated by Kabuto
Edited by vensu
Checked by Baha

Released by : #blackout@irchighway.net
http://www.blackout-mangas.cjb.net

Scanned by vensu
Translated by Sherry
Edited by vensu
Checked by Baha

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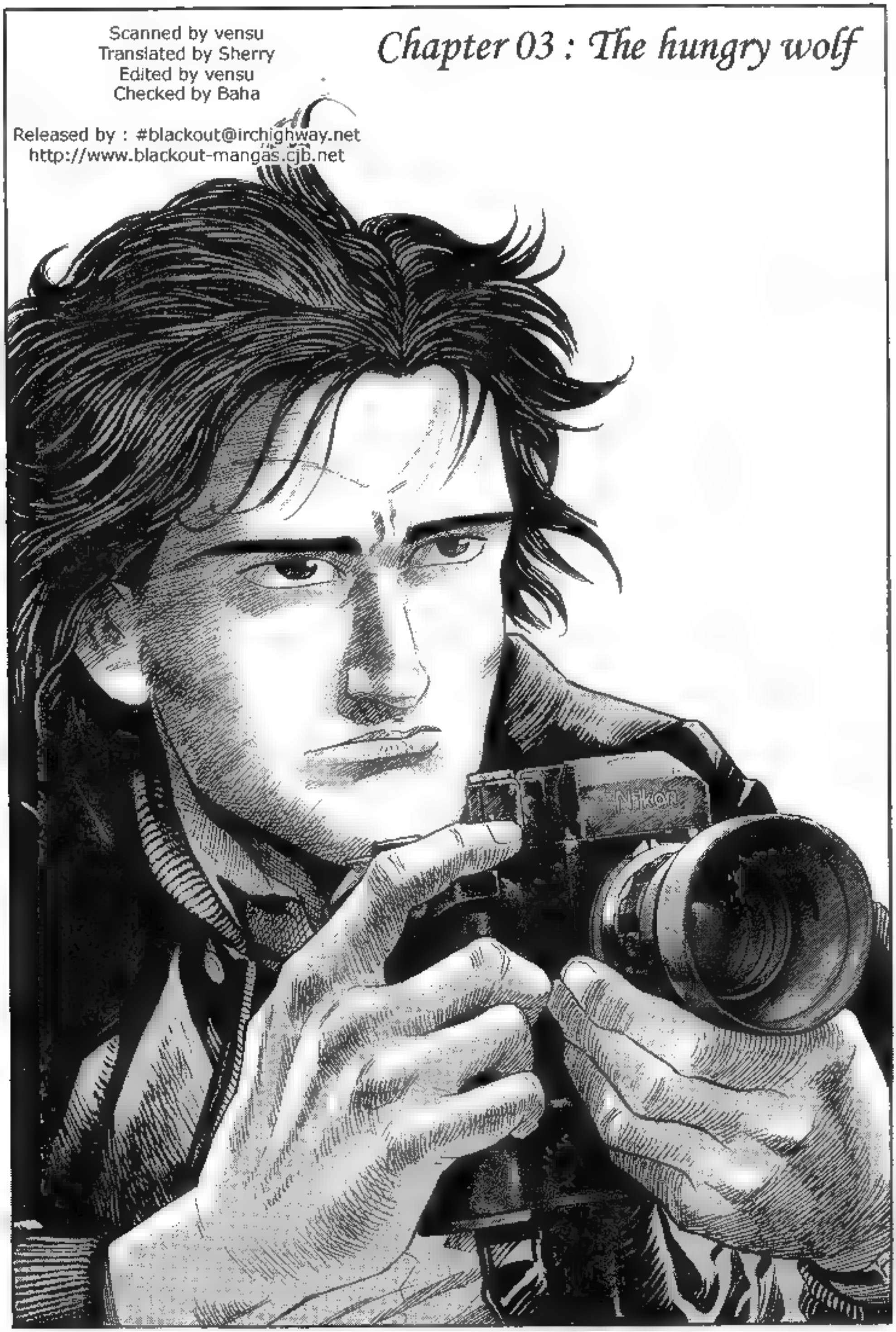
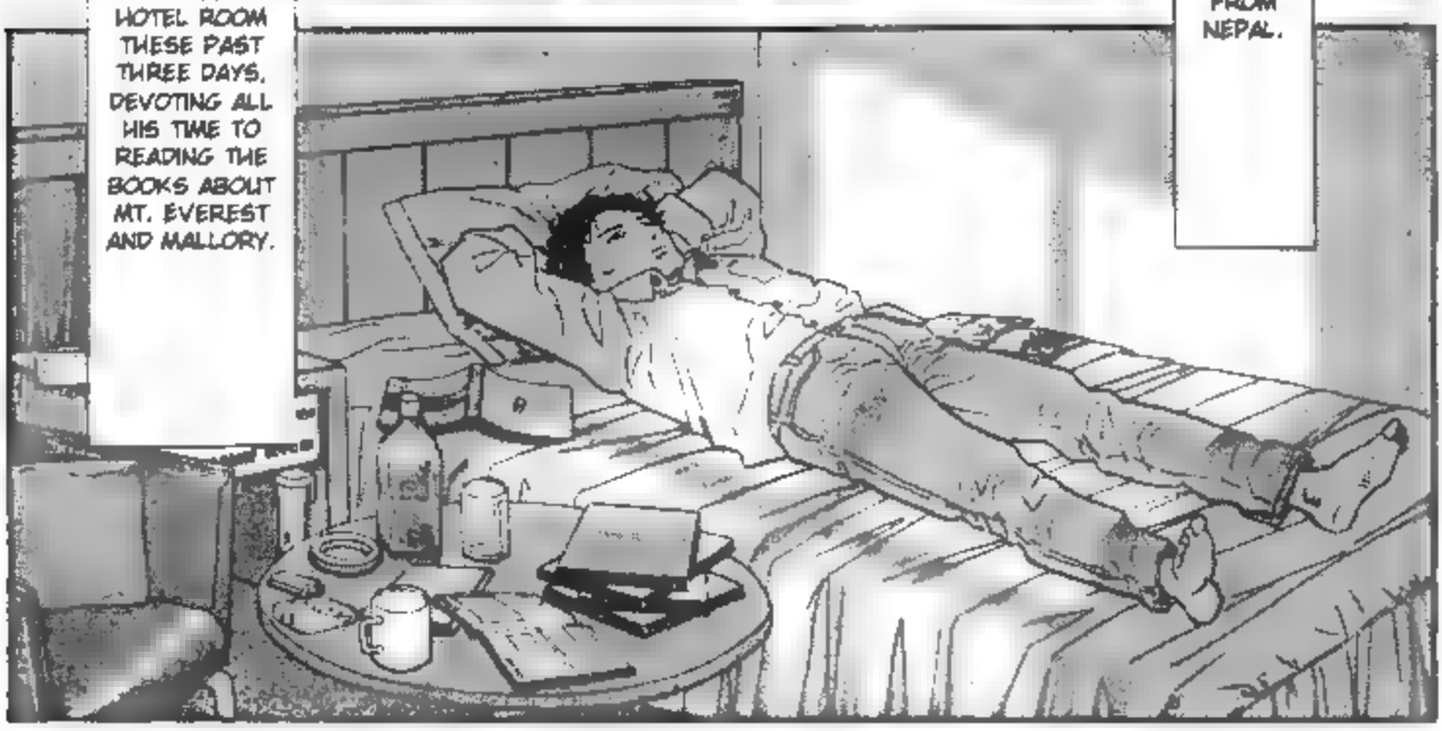
Chapter 03 : The hungry wolf



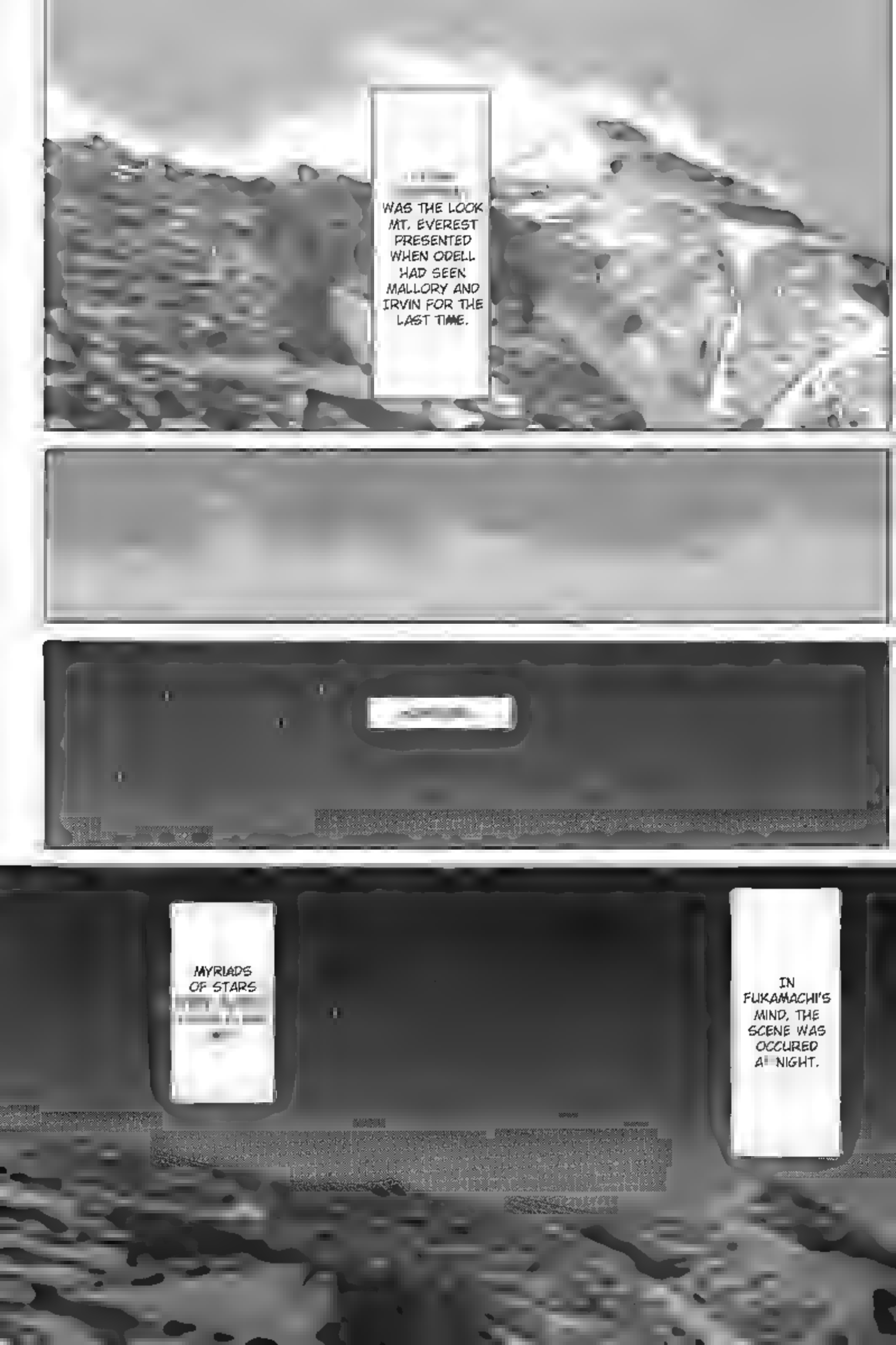
TOKYO
...tuuuut

THE Mystery of Mallory and
THE EPIC OF MOUNT EVEREST
BY SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND
ONE WEEK HAD PASSED BY SINCE HIS RETURN FROM NEPAL.


FUKAMACHI HASN'T LEFT HIS HOTEL ROOM THESE PAST THREE DAYS, DEVOTING ALL HIS TIME TO READING THE BOOKS ABOUT MT. EVEREST AND MALLORY.

AT THIS MOMENT, HE IS REMINDED VERY CLEARLY ABOUT THE SNOW-COVERED ROCK MASS ON TOP OF EVEREST.

Freefall

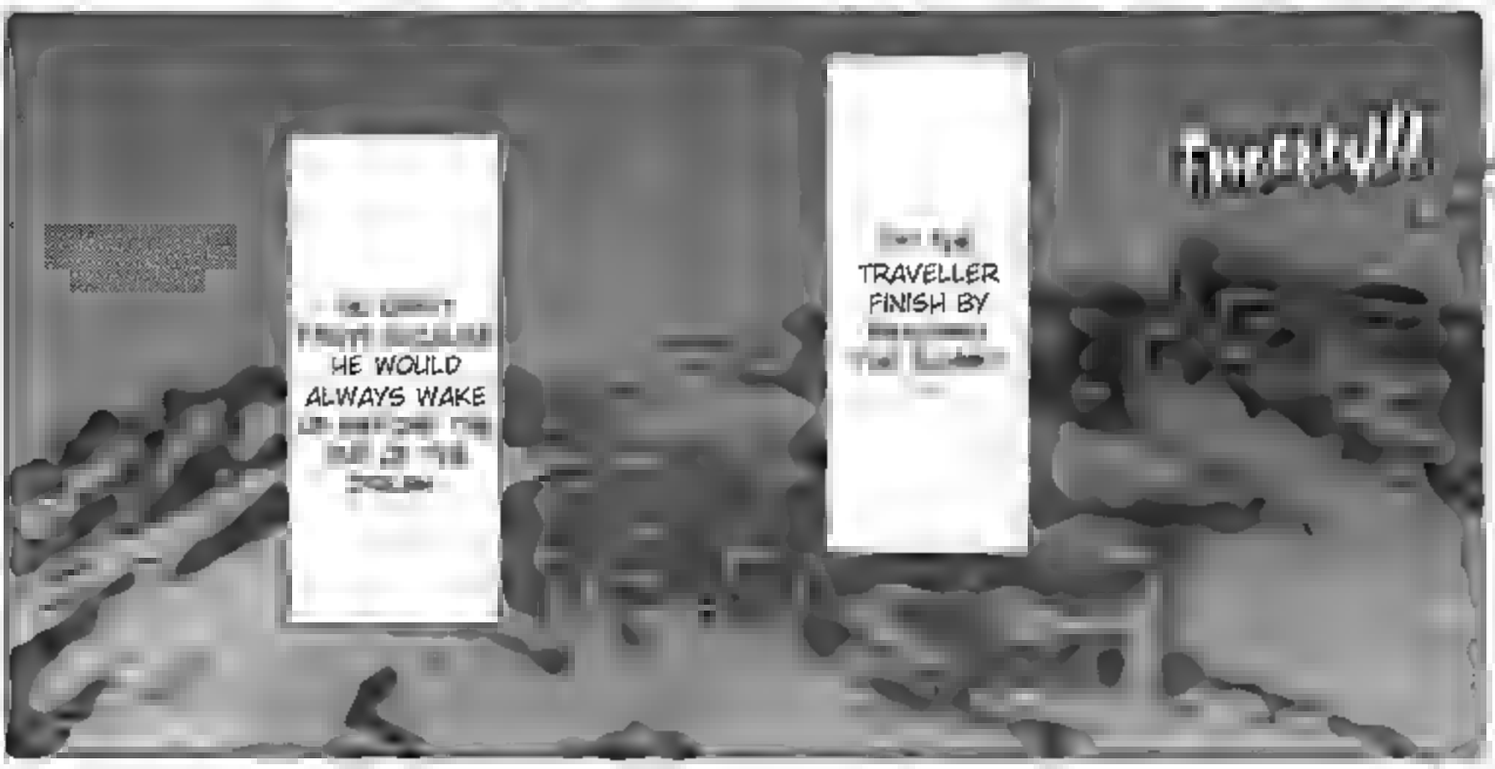

WAS THE LOOK MT. EVEREST PRESENTED WHEN ODELL HAD SEEN MALLORY AND IRVIN FOR THE LAST TIME.
MYRIADS OF STARS
IN FUKAMACHI'S MIND, THE SCENE WAS OCCURED AT NIGHT.

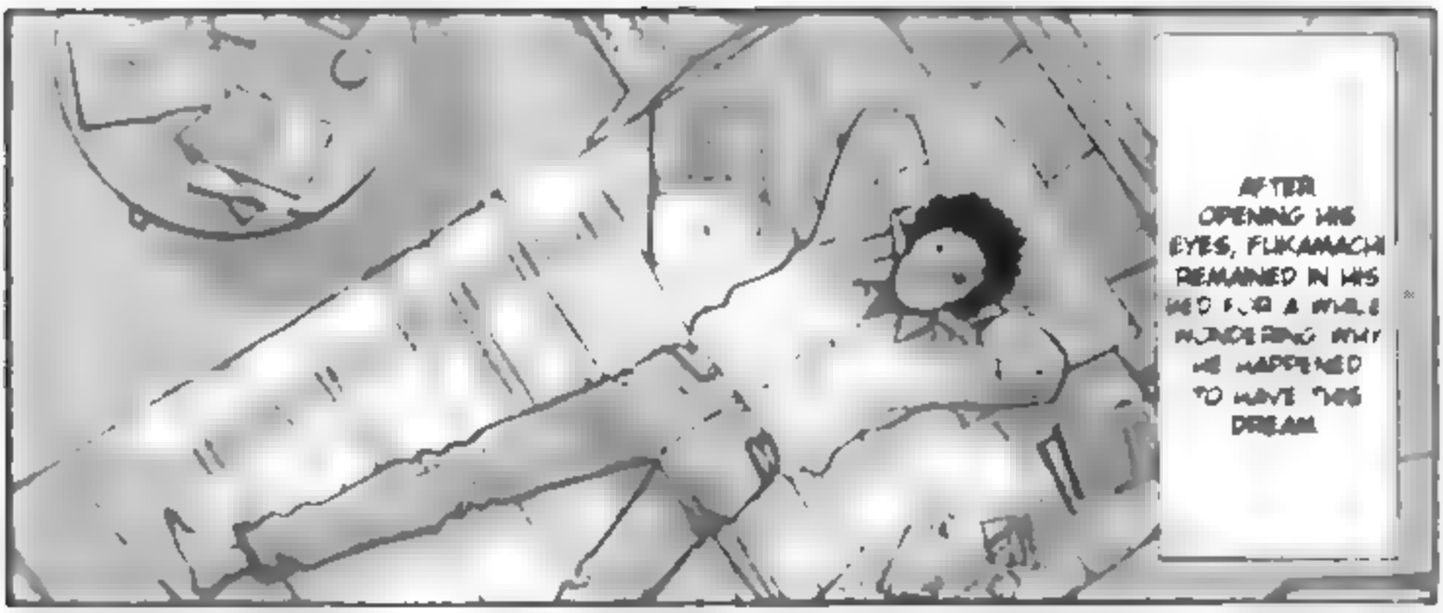
THE
ABSOLUTE
SILENCE

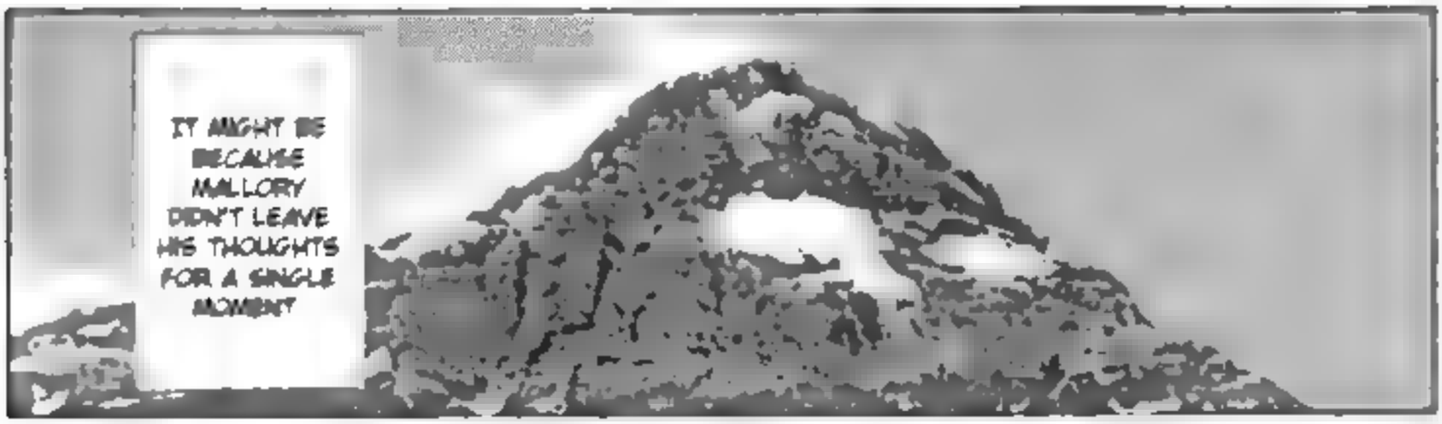
BUT LOOKING AT THE SILHOUETTE MOVING AWAY, FUKAMACHI IS OVERWHELMED BY DESPAIR.

"WAIT...!
DON'T LEAVE ME!"

IT SEEMED TO FUKAMACHI THAT IT WASN'T TOWARD THE TOP THAT THE MAN WAS HEADING


HE WOULD ALWAYS WAKE
TRAVELLER FINISH BY

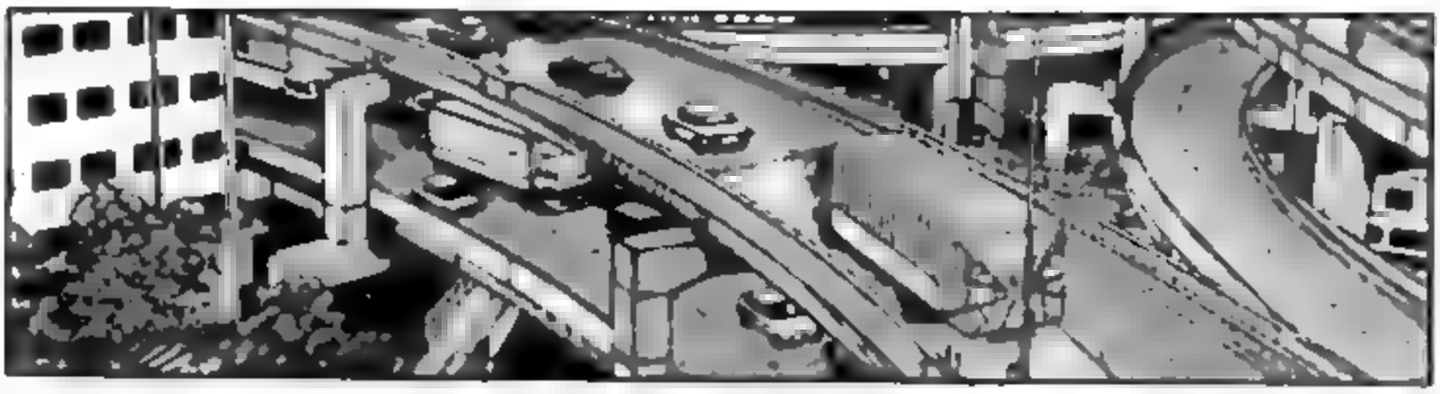

AFTER OPENING HIS EYES, FUKAMACHI REMAINED IN HIS BED FOR A WHILE WONDERING WHY HE HAPPENED TO HAVE THIS DREAM.


IT MIGHT BE BECAUSE MALLORY DIDN'T LEAVE HIS THOUGHTS FOR A SINGLE MOMENT

"BECAUSE IT'S HERE ..."

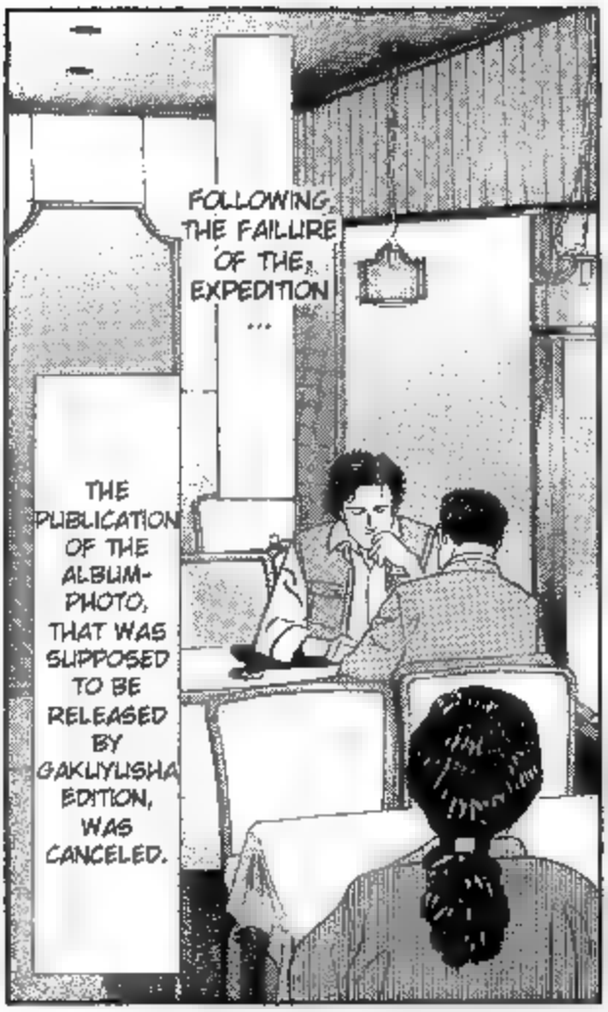
THAT'S WHAT MALLORY ANSWERED TO A JOURNALIST WHO ASKED HIM WHY HE WANTED TO CLIMB THE EVEREST.

I'M IN YOUR HOTEL'S TEA ROOM.
CAN YOU MEET ME THERE ?
OK. I'M COMING RIGHT NOW.
MIYAKAWA HERE.
FUKAMACHI ?
OK!



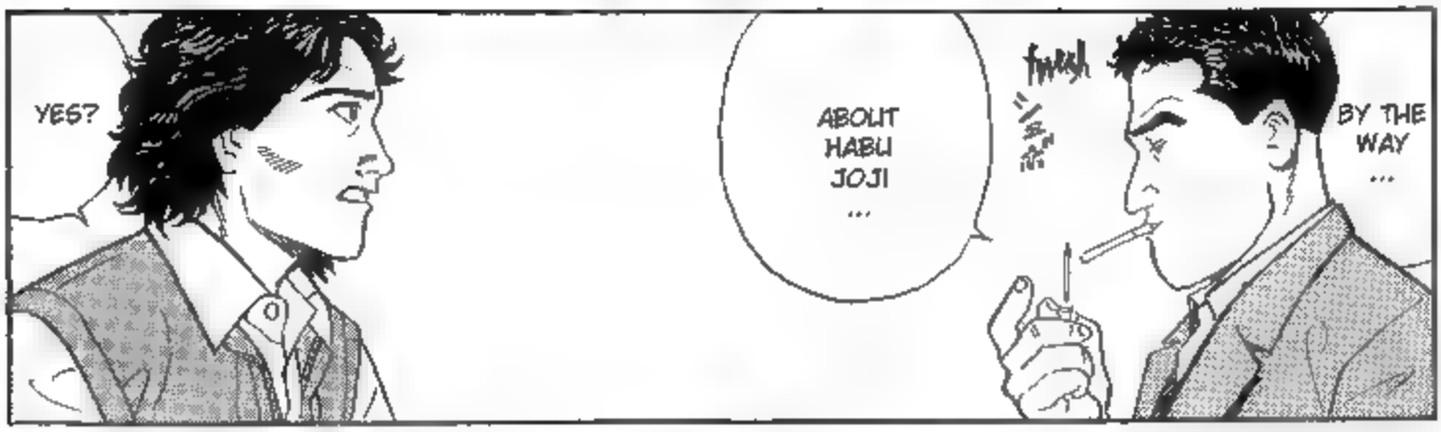
I STILL DIDN'T SEE THE OTHERS MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION. I ONLY TALKED TO THEM BY PHONE.
I MET KUDO-SAN BUT...

YEAH.
I SEE ...
IT HAS ALREADY BEEN A WEEK.
THE FIRST THING I DID WHEN I ARRIVED WAS TO PAY A VISIT TO IOKA'S AND FUNA-JIMA'S FAMILIES TO DEPOSIT AN INCENSE STICK ON THEIR ALTARS.


FOLLOWING THE FAILURE OF THE EXPEDITION ...
THE PUBLICATION OF THE ALBUM-PHOTO, THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE RELEASED BY GAKUYUSHA EDITION, WAS CANCELED.

IT'S TOO BAD THAT THIS ALBUM WON'T BE ABLE TO BE PUBLISHED.
IT'S REALLY A WASTE, SUCH BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS ...

MY PLEASURE
IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO NOT USE THEM. I WOULD LIKE TO USE SOME OF THEM FOR A MAGAZINE, IF IT'S OK WITH YOU...


YES?
ABOUT HABU JOJI ...
twitch
BY THE WAY ...

HOW COME ?
I QUESTIONED ALL THE PEOPLE WHO WERE LIKELY TO KNOW THE ACTUAL WHEREABOUTS OF HABU, BUT I FAILED.
NO, PRECISELY ... ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.

DID YOU FIND SOME-THING?

REALLY ?
IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT ALMOST NOBODY STILL CARES ABOUT HIM.

BUT HABU HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ECCENTRIC.
I DON'T KNOW.

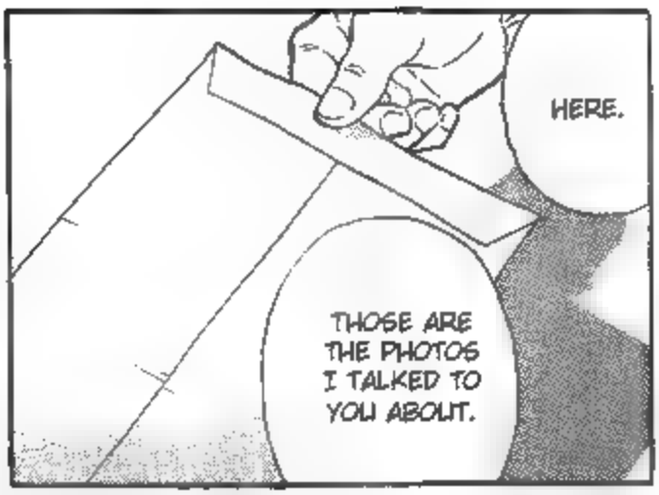
ARE YOU SERIOUS ?
THAT AGAIN ? HOW DID THIS FUNNY IDEA CAME INTO YOUR MIND?

WELL, IT'S SIMPLY THAT...
I WONDER FOR WHICH REASON YOU INQUIRE ABOUT HIM ...
FURTHER-MORE...
I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHY HE SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED.

...
AFTER ALL, THE RESEARCH I'VE MADE IS NOT VERY DEEP.
THEN DON'T GIVE UP YET.

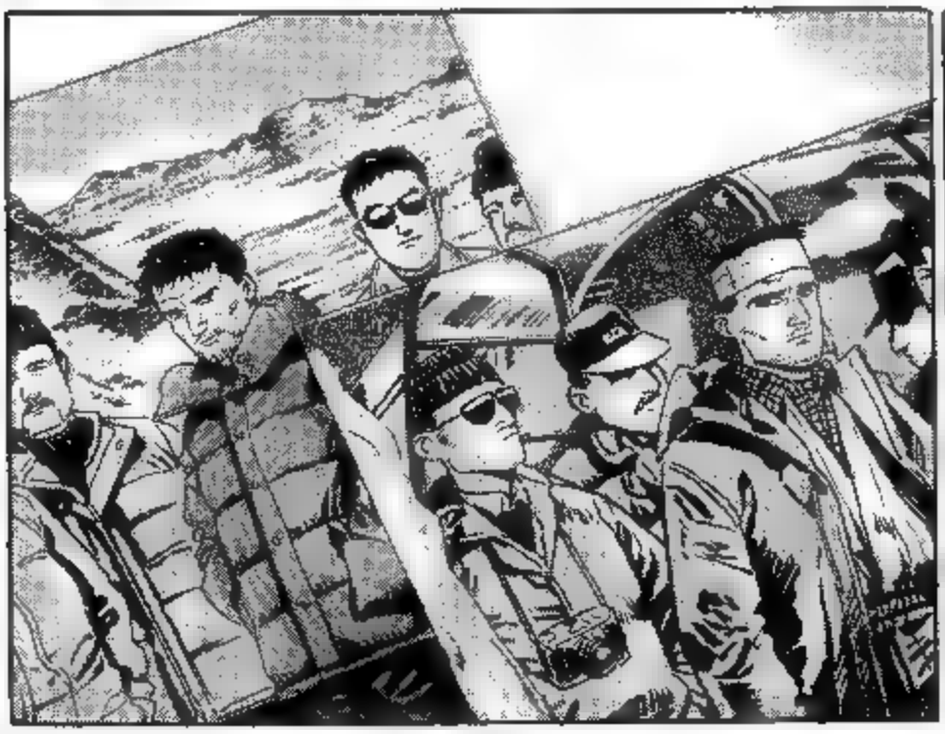
REALLY SERIOUS.
YES.

...
THE FIRST ONE IS THE DATE OF HIS ACCIDENT ■ THE BIG JORASSES.
THE SECOND WAS TAKEN WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION WHICH TRIED TO CLIMB MT. EVEREST.


HERE.
THOSE ARE THE PHOTOS I TALKED TO YOU ABOUT.

HE WILL CERTAINLY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.
YOU SHOULD ASK KUDO TO PUT YOU IN CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WHO KNEW HABU.

IT'S PERFECT. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
THERE ARE THE ONLY COPIES OF THE PHOTOS THAT APPEARED ■ OUR MAGAZINE. IS THAT OK?



THAT'S TRUE. I'LL ASK HIM.
YES.

IN THE FIRST PHOTO, HABU WAS MORE OR LESS THIRTY YEARS OLD.

THE SEVERE GLANCE WITH WHICH HE LAID DOWN THE OBJECTIVE OF THE CAMERA HAD SOMETHING OF THE GLEAM WHICH SHONE ■ THE EYES OF THE MAN THAT I MET IN KATMANDOU.

THE HARDNESS OF HIS GLANCE HAD BEEN ACCENTUATED
IN THE SECOND PHOTO, HIS FACE WAS THE ONE OF A MAN IN HIS FORTIES.

AS IF IT WERE TOO INTENSE TO BE CONTAINED, HIS FEELINGS, ITS FEELINGS PIERCED THROUGH ITS GLANCE.
THE FRUSTATION AND INDIGNATION COULD BE READ IN HIS EYES.

I WAS TOLD THAT THIS HABU WAS REALLY UNPLEASANT ...
AT LEAST, THAT'S HOW IT SEEMED TO FUKA-MACHI.

MOST OF HIS COMRADES STAYED AWAY FROM HIM.
IT MUST BE BECAUSE OF HIS PERSONALITY THAT...

SOMETHING IN HIS EXPRESSION MAKES YOU THINK OF A 14 OR 15 YEAR OLD ADOLESCENT
HIS FACE IS DEFINITELY THE ONE OF A 40 YEAR OLD MAN, BUT...

"I DON'T TRUST ANYONE" THE BOY IN THE MAN SEEMED TO SAY.

"LIKEWISE, I DON'T ASK ANYONE TO TRUST ME EITHER..."

A SOLITARY MAN.

IT IS A TEENAGER FIRMLY DETERMINED TO LIVE IN LONELINESS THAT COULD BE SEEN IN THIS MAN.

SOMETHING DEEPLY TOUCHING COME OUT FROM THIS PHOTOGRAPH.

THERE WAS SOMETHING ■ THIS INDEFINABLE EXPRESSION OF HIS THAT WAS REALLY ATTRACTIVE.

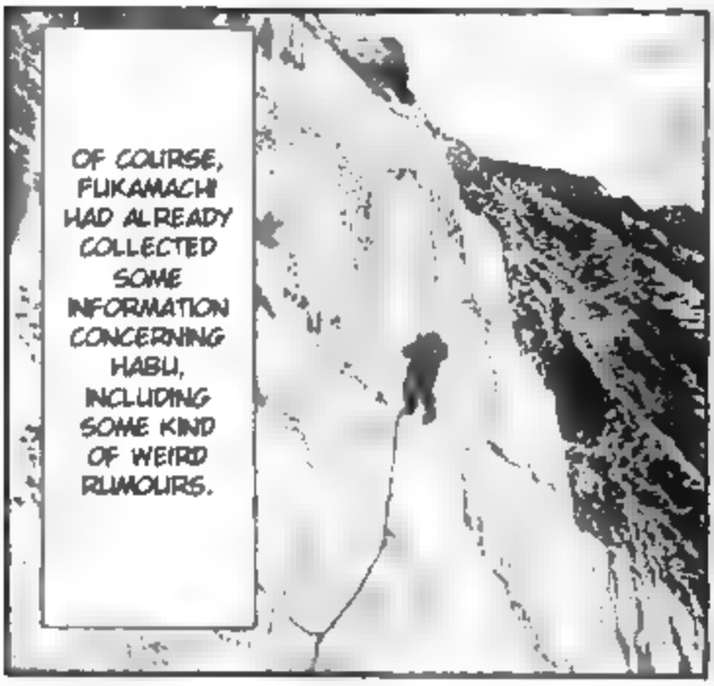
NO DOUBT !

DOM DOM

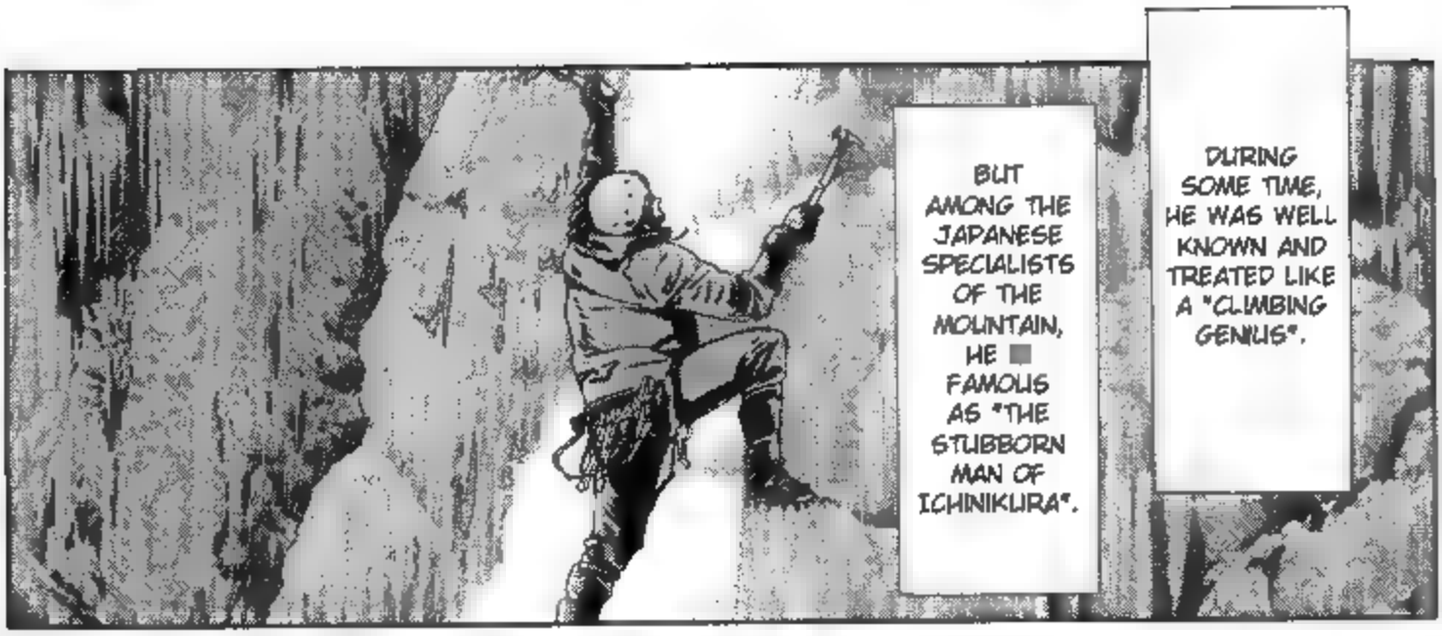
THE JAPANESE ENCOUNTERED IN KATMANDU
AND THIS MAN ON THE PHOTO
ARE DEFINITELY THE SAME PERSON
DOM
DOM
FWUUUSH!!
SO IT REALLY WAS HABU JOJI AFTER ALL!

FUKA-MACHI WAS WAITING FOR ITO KOICHIRO.

FUKAMACHI HAS BEEN ABLE TO CONTACT HIM THANKS TO KUDO EIJI'S HELP.
ITO WAS THE DIRECTOR OF THE ALPINE CLUB IN WHICH HABU ENTERED.


OF COURSE, FUKAMACHI HAD ALREADY COLLECTED SOME INFORMATION CONCERNING HABU, INCLUDING SOME KIND OF WEIRD RUMOURS.

HABU JOJI ... HE MUST BE 49 YEARS OLD NOW.


DURING SOME TIME, HE WAS WELL KNOWN AND TREATED LIKE A "CLIMBING GENIUS".
BUT AMONG THE JAPANESE SPECIALISTS OF THE MOUNTAIN, HE [redacted] FAMOUS AS "THE STUBBORN MAN OF ICHINIKURA".

WHAT IS SURPRISING, IS THAT HABU SUDDENLY DISPPEARED FROM THE MIDPOINT OF THE ALPINISM AFTERTHE HIMALAYAN MOVEMENT IN 1986.

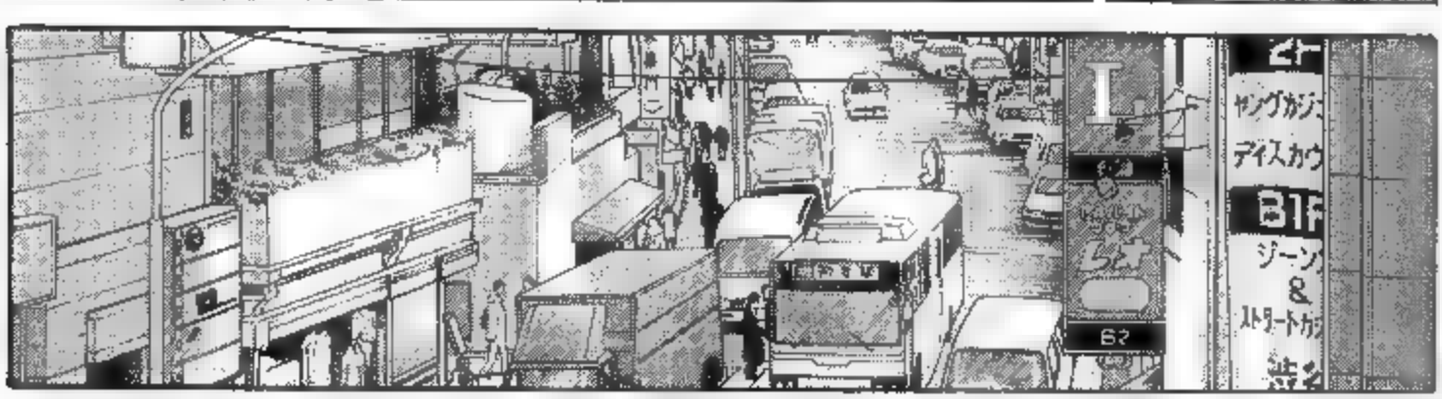
THE RUMOUR CLAIMS THAT WHAT HE DID ON MT. EVEREST AT THIS TIME WAS WORTH OF A DEFINITIVE EXCLUSION.

AND HOW ON EARTH DID HE GAIN POSSESSION OF THIS CAMERA?
WHAT IS HE DOING IN NEPAL ?

SO YOU WANT ME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT HABU, RIGHT?
THAT'S RIGHT.

AH. NO, NO.
EXCUSE ME FOR HAVING MADE YOU WAIT.
I AM ITO KOCHIRO.
I'M THE ONE WHO MUST APOLOGIZE FOR MAKING YOU COME HERE.

EXCUSE ME.
YOU ARE FUKAMACHI-SAN, ARENT YOU?

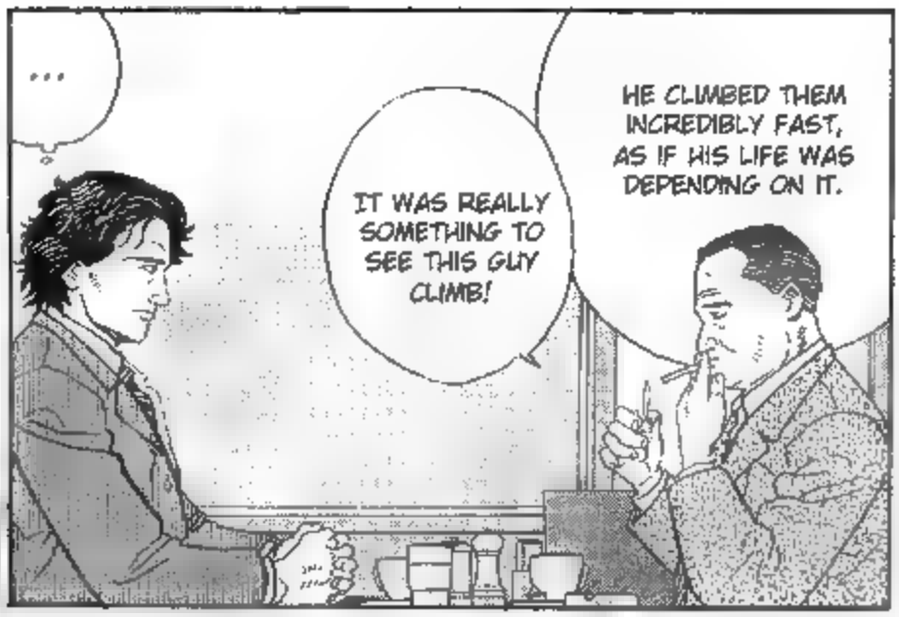


HABU ...
HE ALWAYS CHOSE THE MOST DIFFICULT PATHS.

PLEASE DO.

IF I SMOKE ?
IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU...

DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS ?
AND NOW ...


...
IT WAS REALLY SOMETHING TO SEE THIS GUY CLIMB!
HE CLIMBED THEM INCREDIBLY FAST, AS IF HIS LIFE WAS DEPENDING ON IT.

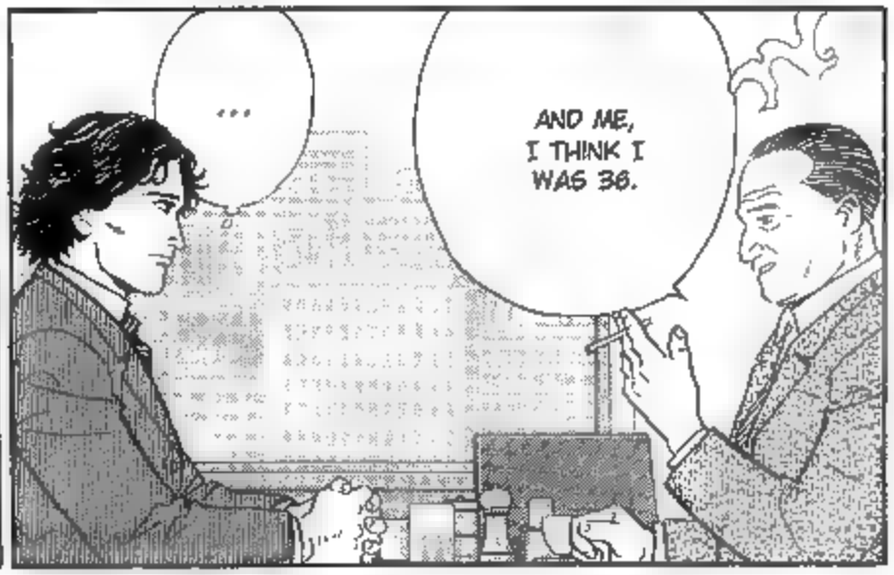
...
SINCE THOSE EVENTS ■ MT. EVEREST, IN 1985... NOTHING...
I GUESS THAT YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT IT.

I HAVE NO IDEA.
ABOUT THAT ...

IT HAS BEEN 8 YEARS ...
BEFORE THAT, HE WOULD CALL ME OR SEND ME A POSTCARD FROM TIME TO TIME, SO I KNEW MORE OR LESS WHAT HE WAS DOING AT THE TIME.
BUT NOW, I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF HE'S STILL ALIVE ...

IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, IT WAS IN 1960.
HABU WAS... 16 YEARS OLD BACK THEN.
109
UCカード

ONE DAY, HE CAME TO MY HOUSE, LIKE THAT, WITHOUT ASKING.


...
AND ME, I THINK I WAS 36.

IT WAS REALLY SOMETHING ...
THIS AIR OF DEFIANCE HE HAD ...

REALLY ?

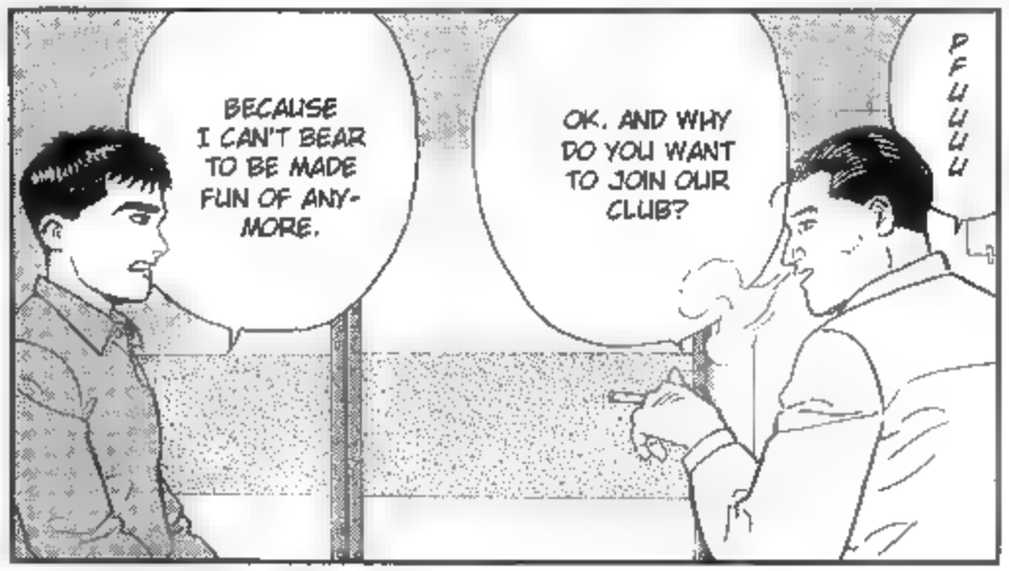
IT WAS TO ASK ME IF HE COULD JOIN OUR CLUB.

HE WAS VERY RED AND FIXED ON ME LIKE HE WANTED TO INTIMIDATE ME.
EVEN THE TONE OF HIS VOICE WAS AGGRESSIVE.
I WANT TO BE PART OF YOUR CLUB!
HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT ITS EXISTENCE.
TELL ME FIRST ...
I SAW YOU !
...
AT THE SHINJUKU STATION!
I SAW YOU AND THE OTHERS MEMBERS OF THE CLUB!
WHAT DID YOU SEE?
HOW COME ?

STAP
STAP
STAP
STAP

SHUUP
THERE WAS YOUR ADDRESS, HERE, IN MACHIDA.
I MEMORIZED IT. SO... THAT'S WHY I CAME ...
YOU ALL HAD LARGE BLACK BAGS WITH THE LOGO "ALPINE CLUB SEIFU".

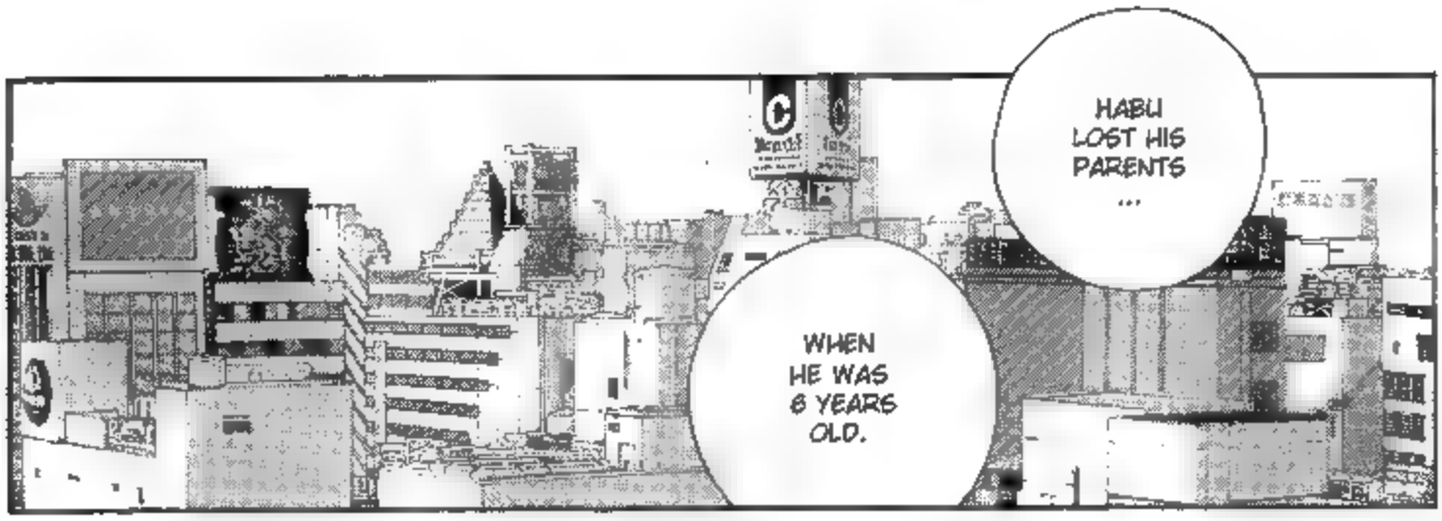
...

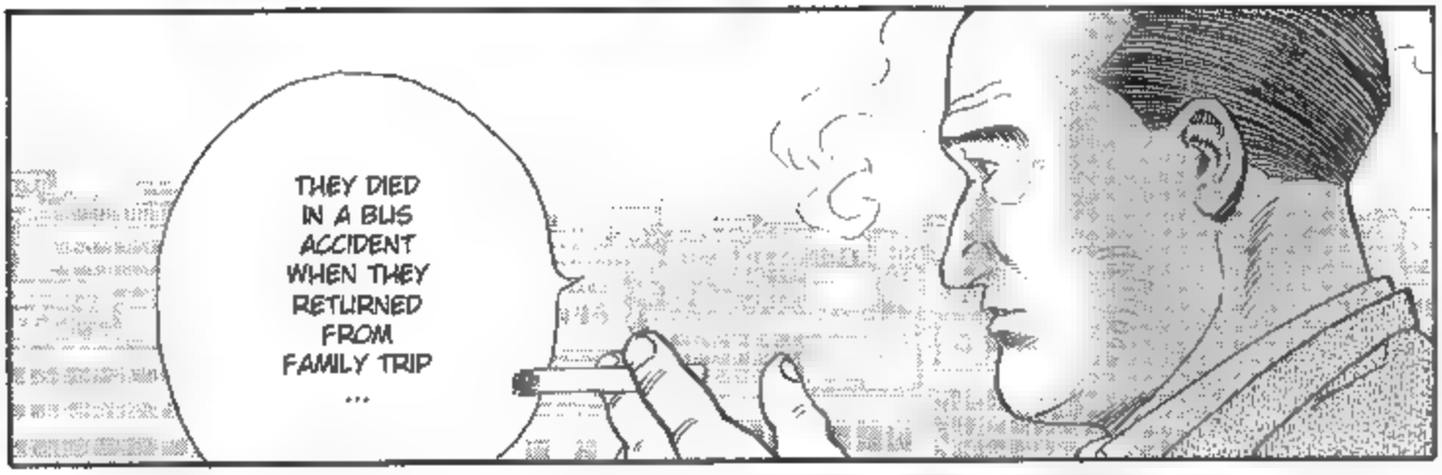

BECAUSE I CAN'T BEAR TO BE MADE FUN OF ANY-MORE.
OK. AND WHY DO YOU WANT TO JOIN OUR CLUB?
PFUUUU

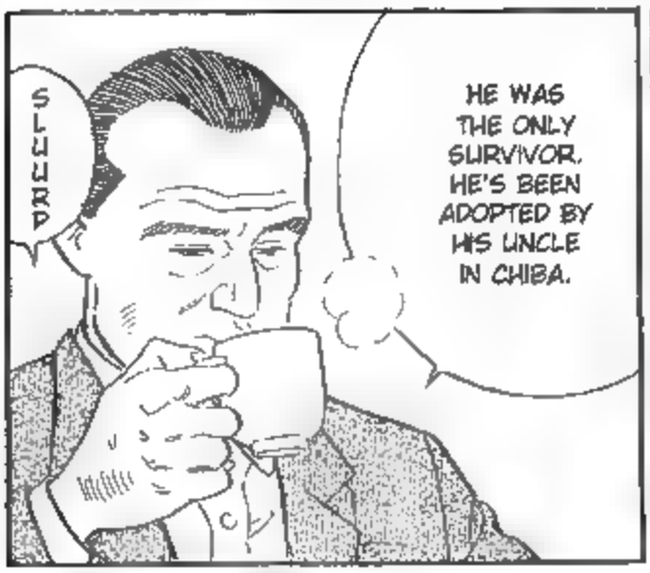
EVERY-ONE?
BUT WHY ?
BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE PARENTS.
AND ALSO ... BECAUSE I HAVE A BAD LEG.

REALLY? THERE'RE SOME PEOPLE OUT THERE MAKING FUN OF YOU ?
YES. EVERY-ONE.

EVERYONE LOOKS AT ME AS IF I WAS SOME KIND OF MORON.


HABU LOST HIS PARENTS ...
WHEN HE WAS 6 YEARS OLD.


THEY DIED IN A BUS ACCIDENT WHEN THEY RETURNED FROM FAMILY TRIP ...


SLURP
HE WAS THE ONLY SURVIVOR. HE'S BEEN ADOPTED BY HIS UNCLE IN CHIBA.

...
HIS LITTLE SISTER DIED TOO IN THIS ACCIDENT.

THE ACCIDENT LEFT HIM REPER-CUSSIONS.
THAT'S WHY HE TRAILS HIS LEG SLIGHTLY WHEN HE WALKS.

...

WHY?

I DON'T UNDER-STAND ...
PEOPLE WON'T MAKE FUN OF YOU ANYMORE IF YOU JOIN OUR CLUB ?
NO.

AT SHINJUKU, EVERYONE PARTED TO LET YOU PASS.
BECAUSE YOU'RE DOING SOMETHING THE OTHERS CAN'T DO.

HMM!
IT'S STILL BETTER THAN BEING TREATED LIKE A MORON.
POK

AH AH AH
THAT'S BECAUSE WE FRIGHTEN THEM WITH OUR FILTHY AND DIRTY APPEARANCE!

HAVE YOU MADE EXPEDITIONS BEFORE?
A LITTLE ...

I DON'T REALLY KNOW ...

TELL ME ...
DO YOU LIKE THE MOUNTAIN ?
...

YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU WENT? ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME?

IT'S THE TRUTH.

WHAT MOUNTAIN DID YOU CLIMB ?

I DON'T KNOW ...

tok

OH YEAH ?

TELL ME ABOUT IT.

...

IT WAS NEAR TANZAWA, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT ...

I THINK THAT ...

I DON'T KNOW ITS NAME ...

I WAS REALLY CURIOUS TO HEAR WHAT HE WAS GOING TO TELL ME NEXT.

IT WAS IN JULY, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SUMMER'S HOLIDAYS ...

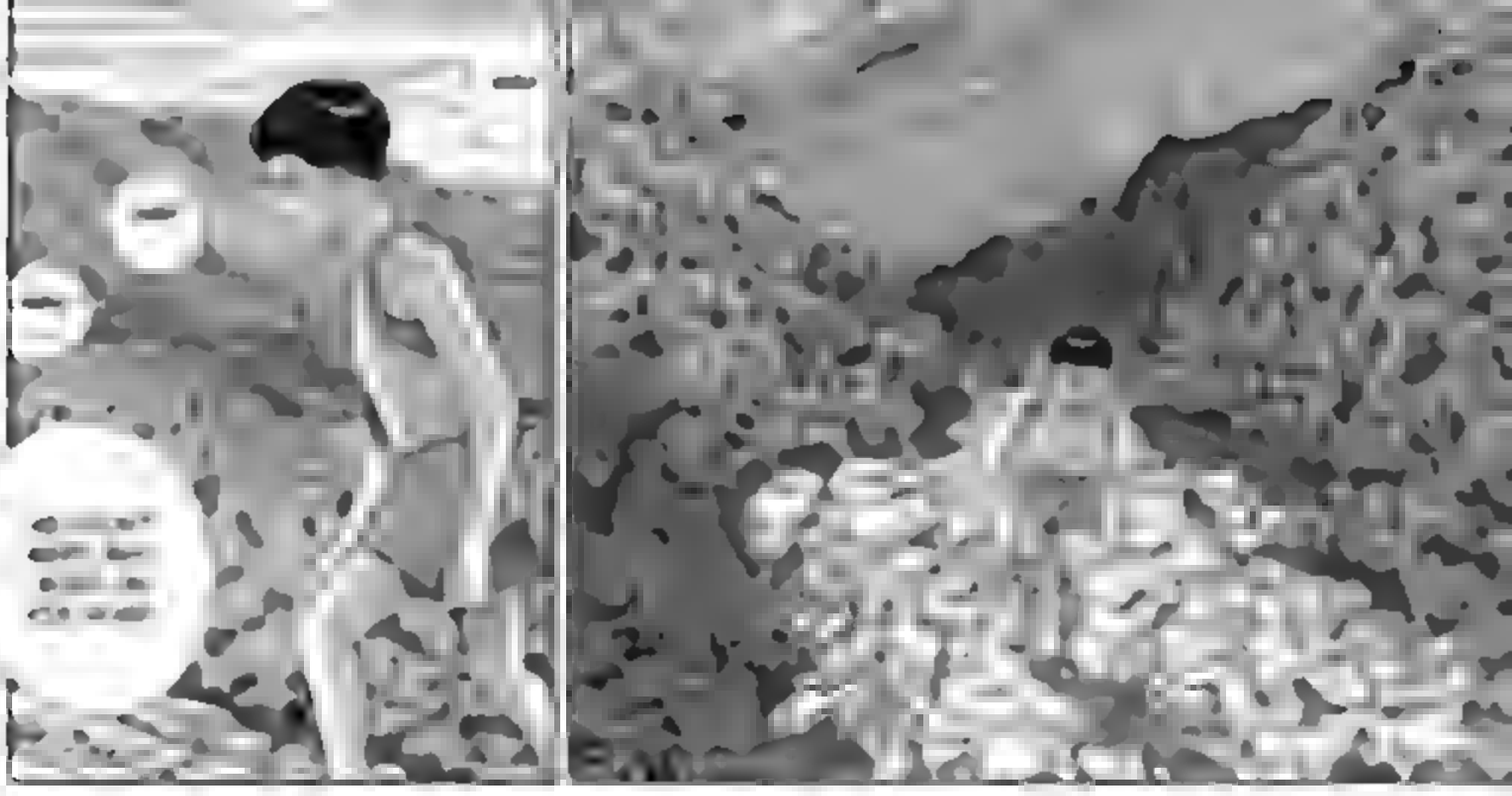
AT THE AGE OF 11, HE WENT TO MAKE AN EXPEDITION ON HIS OWN.

IN THE END, I LEARNT THAT ...

Finally!
HE TOLD ME THAT HE DECIDED TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN HE SAW
BY THE WINDOW OF THE TRAIN WHILE GOING TO HAKONE WITH HIS UNCLE'S FAMILY, SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE.
AS THERE WERE SOME HIKERS AT THE STATION, HE DECIDED TO FOLLOW THEM.
HE TOOK THE ODAKYU LINE AT THE MACHIDA STATION HEADING
AND WHEN HE SAW THE MOUNTAIN, HE GOT OFF.

THE HIKERS WERE WALKING FASTER THAN
HE THEN FOUND HIMSELF ALONE ON AN UNKNOWN TRAIL.
IN FACT, HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE WAS IN THE SOLID MASS OF TANKAWA, THE LARGEST MOUNTAINOUS CHAIN OF THE FIELD IN KANAGAWA.

BUT HE DIDN'T CARE. HE THOUGHT THAT HE WOULD EVENTUALLY END UP ARRIVING AT THE TOP IF HE CONTINUED.
THERE WAS A PATH, BUT AT THE TIME THE TRAIL WAS NOT AS WELL WORN AND CLEAR AS THEY ARE TODAY.
HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW LONG IT'D TAKE...

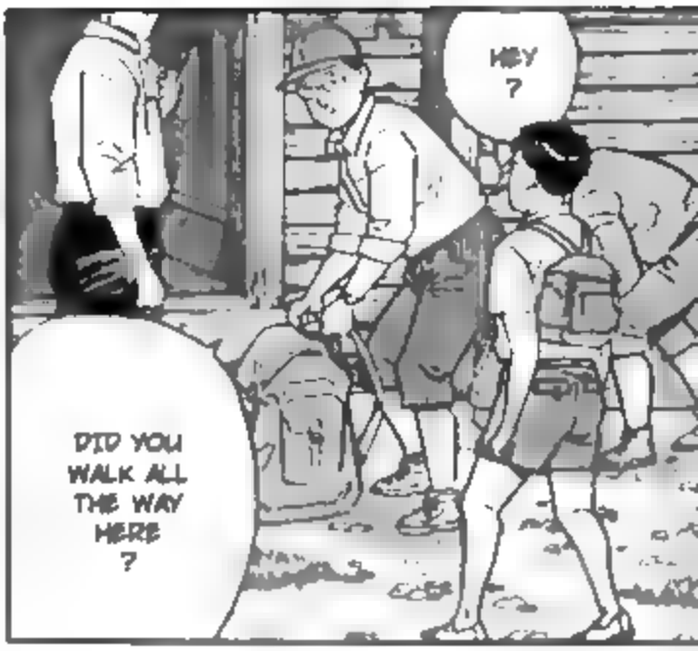


AND THEN THE SUN DAWNED.
OF COURSE HE HAD NO MATERIAL, SO HE SAT CLINGING TO THE ROCKS.
WET BY THE MORNING DEW, HE COULDN'T CLOSE HIS
TO DECEIVE HIS HUNGER, HE SPENT THE
ON CANDYS AND DRING THE WATER FROM

HE ROSE HIS HEAD AND NOTICED THAT HE WAS JUST UNDER THE CREST.
HE COULD SEE THE SHELTER.

DOWN HERE, UNDER THE STARS ...

WHERE DID YOU SPEND THE NIGHT?


HEY ?
DID YOU WALK ALL THE WAY HERE ?

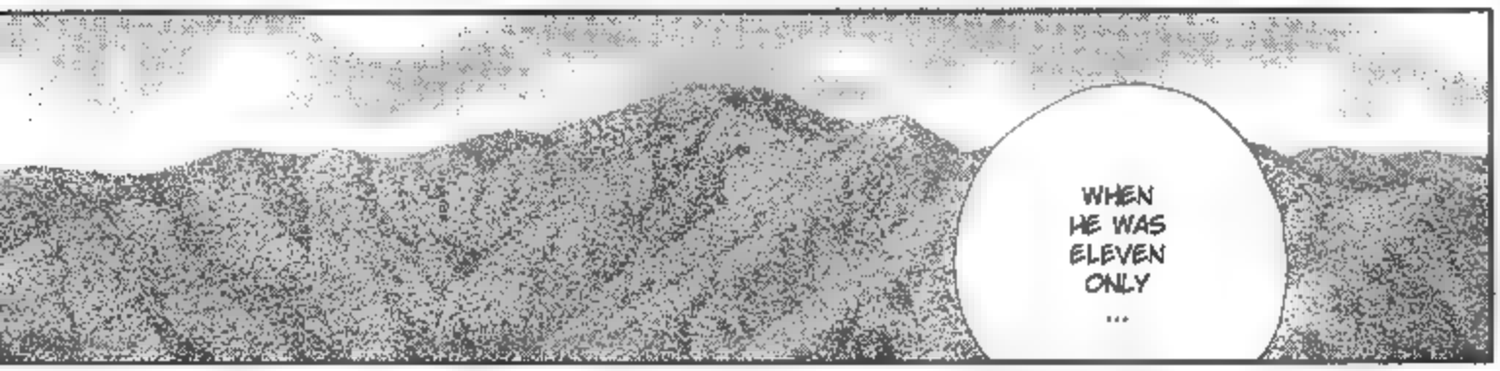
YOU'VE BEEN VERY COURAGEOUS.
I GUESS YOU HAVEN'T BEEN EATING MUCH, ARE YOU HUNGRY ?
YES... I HAVEN'T EATEN.
SINCE YESTERDAY'S LUNCH...

YES.
ARE YOU ALONE ?
OH! YOU'RE GOOD !

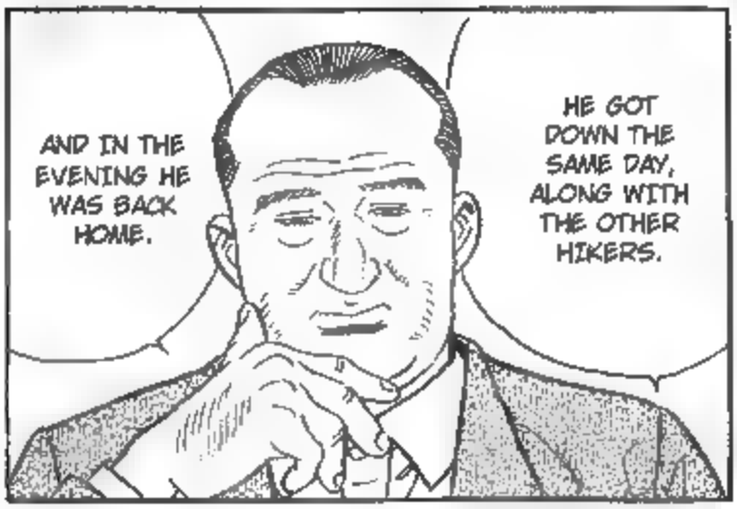
IT WASN'T EASY TO GET UP HERE WALKING ALONE, WHAT A FEAT!
DO YOUR PARENTS KNOW YOU ARE HERE ?
THEY MUST BE WORRIED !

CRUNCH CRUNCH
SCROMP
SCROMP

HMM!
ARE YOU ENJOYING IT?
AH AH AH !

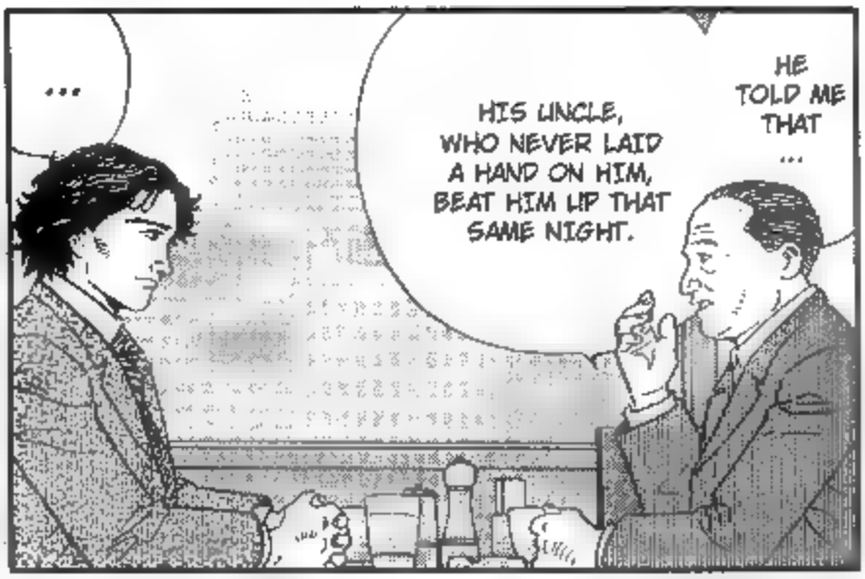

WHEN HE WAS ELEVEN ONLY ...

...


AND IN THE EVENING HE WAS BACK HOME.
HE GOT DOWN THE SAME DAY, ALONG WITH THE OTHER HIKERS.

HABU HAD CLIMBED TONODAKE MOUNT, WITH A HEIGHT OF 1490 METERS, GOING THROUGH THE EDGE OF OKURA.
IT IS THE MINIMUM OF A FOUR HOUR LONG WALK FOR AN ADULT.

HE WAS VERY NICE TO HIS NEPHEW BUT HABU SHOULD HAVE NEVER HAVE GONE WITHOUT TELLING HIM.


...
HIS UNCLE, WHO NEVER LAID A HAND ON HIM, BEAT HIM UP THAT SAME NIGHT.
HE TOLD ME THAT ...

I STILL HEAR HIM ...
TELLING ME THIS STORY WITH HIS PLATE TONE.

WHY DID YOU WANT TO GO TO THE MOUNTAIN ALONE?

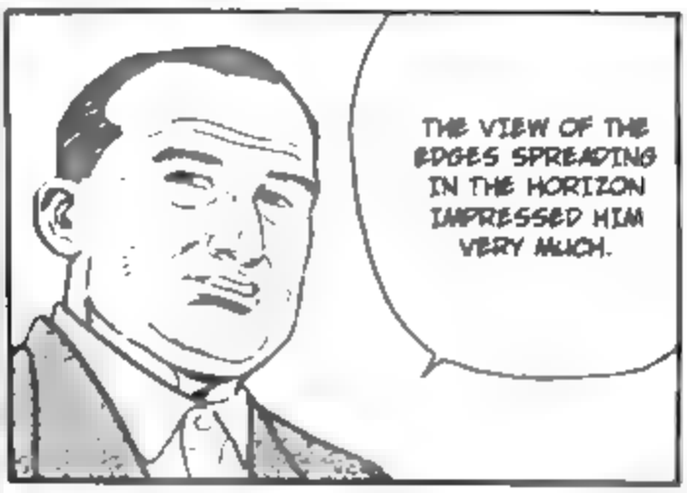
...
I WENT THERE ONCE WITH MY PARENTS.
THEY DIED ON THE WAY BACK.

IT'S BECAUSE I HAD A GOOD MEMORY.

ANYWAY ...
IT WAS NICE.

AND HOW WAS TANZANA ?
DID YOU LIKE IT?
I DON'T KNOW ...

FINALLY ...
I DECIDED ON THAT DAY TO WELCOME HIM IN OUR CLUB, WITHOUT CONSULTING IT WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS.


THE VIEW OF THE EDGES SPREADING IN THE HORIZON IMPRESSED HIM VERY MUCH.

...

*HANAKO RESTAURANT

BOM
THE VALLEY AND FILL IT WITH WATER ?

STAND UP!
DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE ALREADY DONE FOR!
HURRY !
YES ...

NO!
IT'S ALRIGHT, I'M GOING.

COME ON! DON'T TELL ME YOU CAN'T STAND ON YOUR LEGS !
HAA ...
HAA ...
TASHIO, TAKE IT, GO IN HIS STEAD.

AT THAT TIME ...
HE HAD NO ENDURANCE, EVEN FOR A BEGINNER.

HE FILLED THE GOURDS, COOKED THE MEALS... WELL, HE DIDN'T ALLOW HIMSELF A MINUTE TO REST.
CONSEQUENTLY, HE ALWAYS WAS THE FIRST ONE BE TIRED OR SLOWING DOWN.

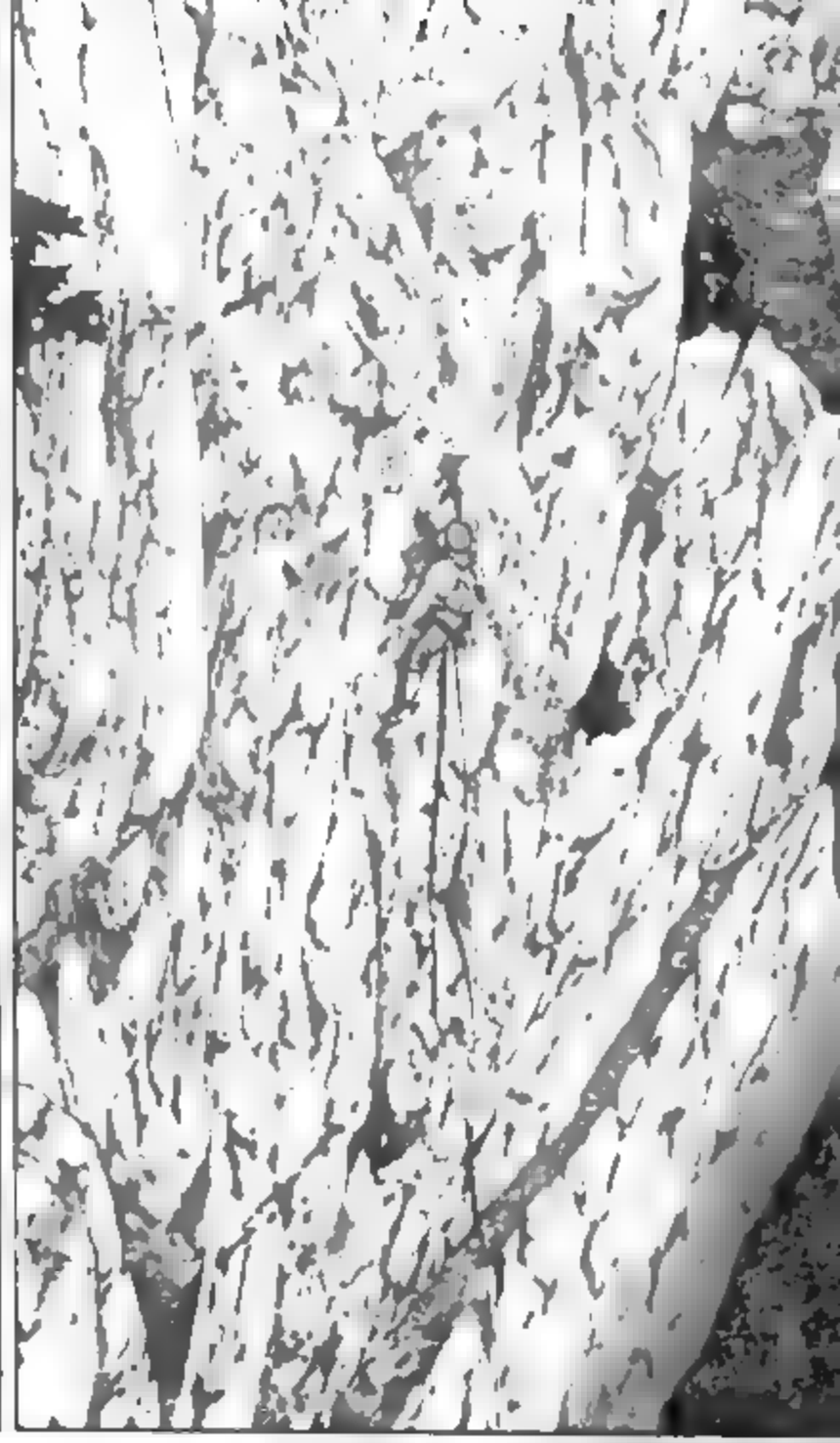
IT'S SURPRISING, ISN'T IT ?
OH YES !
REALLY? IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE.

WHEREVER WE WENT, HE ALWAYS BORE THE HEAVIER BAGS AND WORKED CONSTANTLY HARDER THAN ANYONE.
ON THE OTHER HAND ...

IN A WORD, HE DIDN'T ATTRACT SYMPATHY.
WHY'S THAT ?
GLUG
THAT WAS HIS PROBLEM.
A GUY WHO TRIES THAT HARD SHOULD BE APPRECIATED BY HIS ELDERS, BUT THAT WASN'T THE CASE FOR HABU.
NORMALLY ...
HAA ...
HAA ...
IF YOU GAVE AN EASY TASK TO RELIEVE HIM A BIT, HE REFUSED.
WHEN WE SAW HIM BREATHLESS, WE ASKED HIM TO STOP AND REST.
BUT HE ANSWERED THAT HE WAS FINE AND CONTINUED WALKING. IT'S TRUE WE NEVER HEARD HIM COMPLAIN, BUT...
HAA ...
A BOY NOT PARTICULARLY NIMBLE IN HIS MOVES, WITH A PERSONALITY MADE OF STEEL, RIGHT, BUT ABRUPT AND NOT VERY TALKATIVE ...
THAT'S HOW EVERYONE SAW HIM.
IT WAS OFTEN THE REST OF THE TEAM WHO HAD TO ASSUME HIS SILLINESS.
IT WASN'T RARE HE ENDED FALLING FROM EXHAUSTION.

WOOOOOM
IT'S ONLY THREE YEARS LATER, DURING SUMMER, THAT
I DISCOVERED HE WAS EXCEPTIONALLY GIFTED.

UNTIL NOW I NEVER LET HIM TAKE THE LEAD, BUT...
I ALREADY WENT WITH HIM ON VARIOUS CLIFFS TO TRAIN HIM.
I THOUGHT HE HAD A GOOD SENSE OF BALANCE, AND IT WASN'T THE FIRST TIME WE WENT OVER THIS WALL.
SO I DECIDED TO GIVE HIM THE LEAD AND SEE HOW HE
IT WAS A ONE-CREST OF KITAHODAKA MOUNT.



AH ...
HE IS CRAZY !!

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH
TO SHIFT A LITTLE BIT TO FIND AN EASIER WAY, BUT INSTEAD
WATCHING HIM FROM BELOW, IT WAS HARD TO CONTAIN MYSELF.
HE CHOSE ON PURPOSE TO CLIMB A VERY DANGEROUS WAY.
WHAT'S WITH YOU ?
SORRY ?

I'M ASKING YOU WHY YOU CHOSE THAT CRAZY WAY!

WHY DID YOU USE THAT WAY ?
WHAT ?

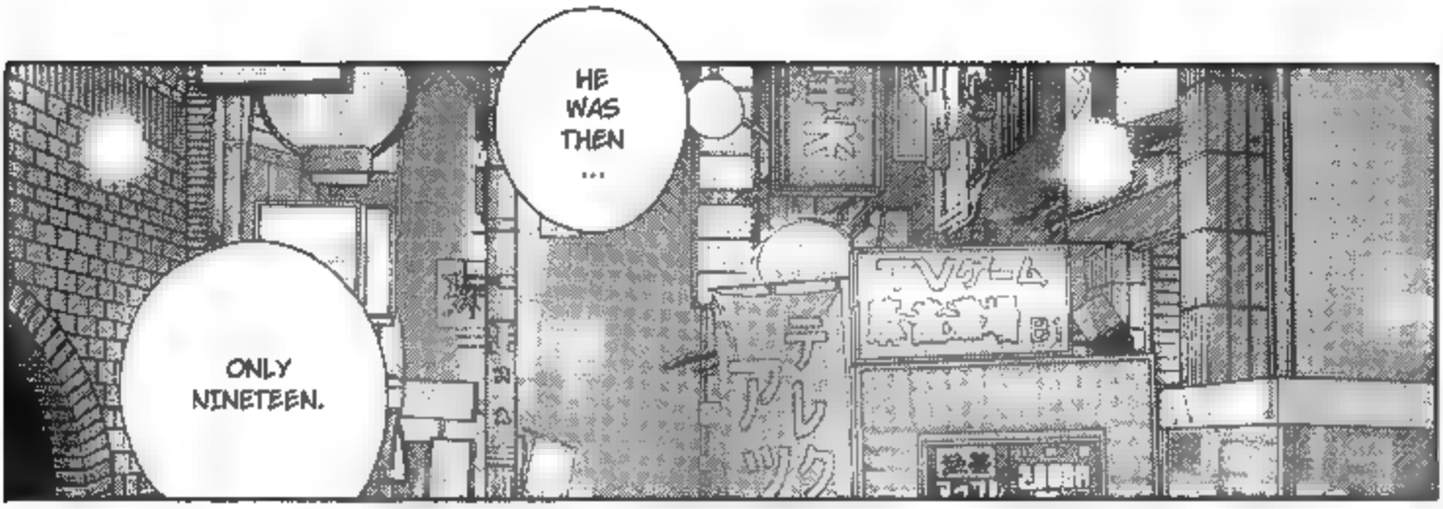
YOU FOOL !
YOU'RE COMPLETELY CRAZY!
BAH ...
WHY ?

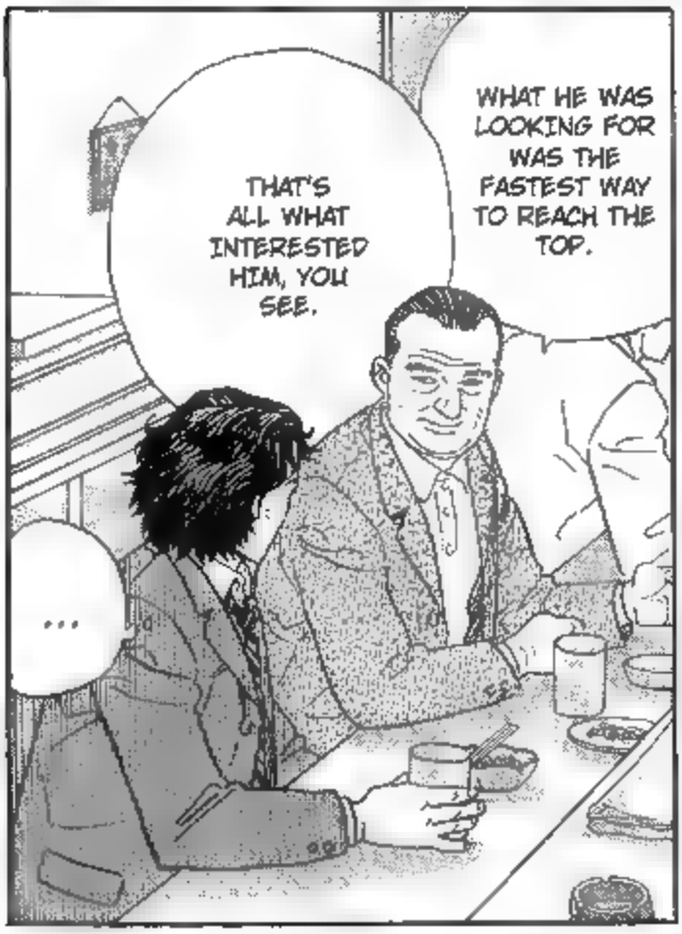
WELL... BECAUSE IT WAS THE SHORTEST WAY...

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING ?
YES ...

...
BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF THE MOUNTAIN!

YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO FEAR THE ROCK MORE THAN THAT!


HE WAS THEN ...
ONLY NINETEEN.


WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR WAS THE FASTEST WAY TO REACH THE TOP.
THAT'S ALL WHAT INTERESTED HIM, YOU SEE.
...

IN FRONT OF A CLIFF ...
HE WASN'T WONDERING WHAT WAS THE SAFEST WAY.

IT MUST BE FROM THAT PERIOD ...
GLOUB

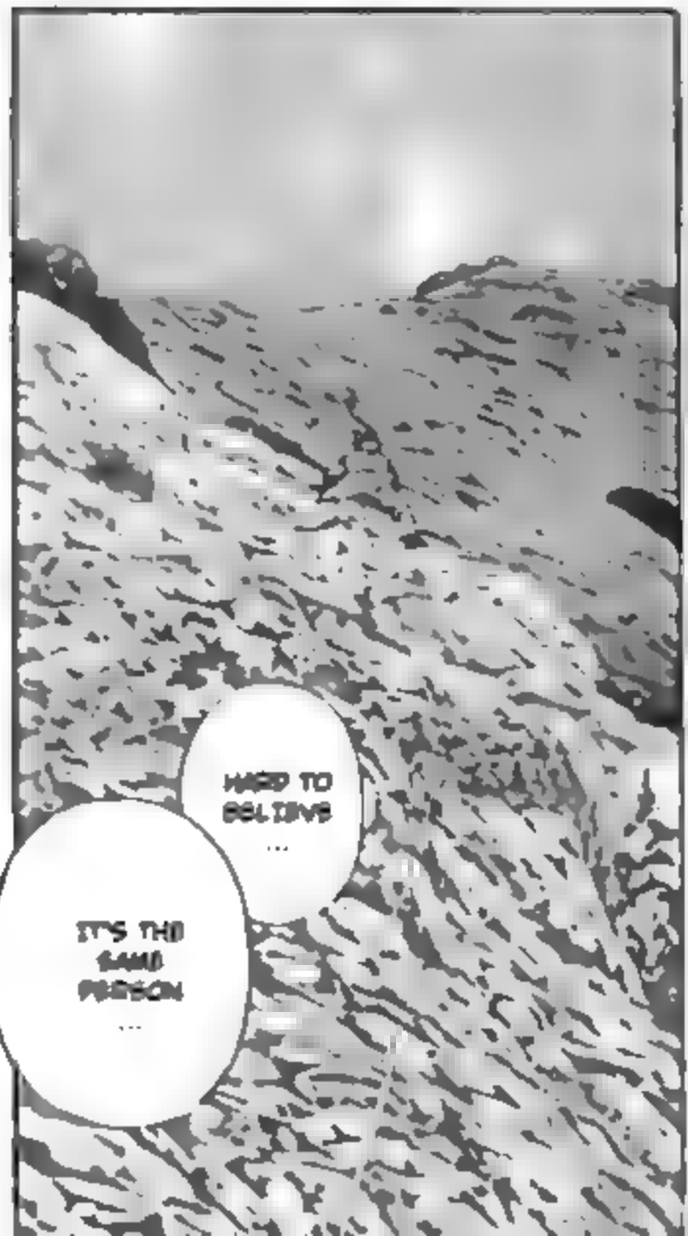
OH IT IS ...
I THINK SO AS WELL.
IT'S AN INNATE GIFT, DON'T YOU THINK SO ?
CLIMBING ...

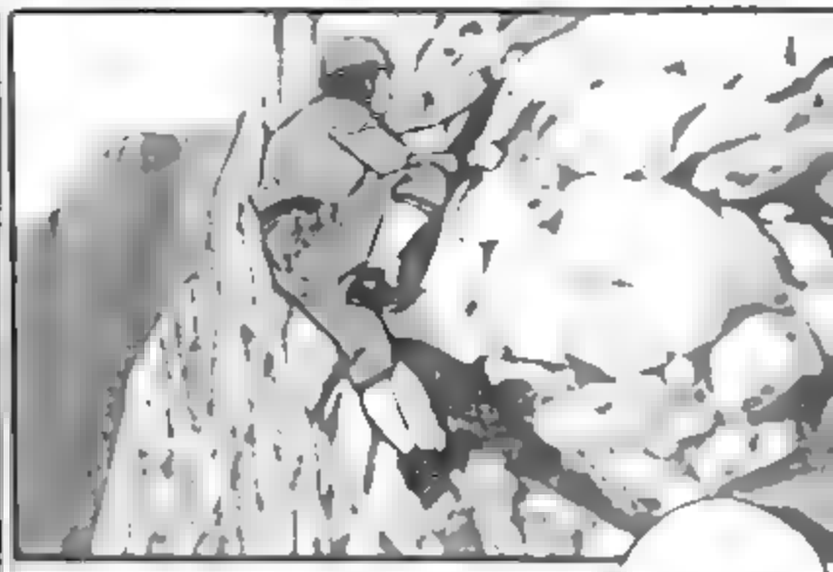
THAT HABU'S EXCEPTIONAL TALENT'S FOR THE CLIFF
STARTED TO RISE.
GWAP
HE ONLY NEEDED 2 YEARS
HE WAS TWENTY ONE...
HE TOOK THE LEAD OF THE CORD MORE OFTEN WHEN GOING UP THE MOUNTAIN.

HE LACKED EXPERIENCE
TECHNICALLY HE COULD PERFECTLY BE COMPARED WITH THE BEST OF THE SEFUKAE.
AND BE AT THE LEVEL OF THE NIMBLEST MEN OF YOUR CLUB, WHICH MEANT HE WAS ONE OF THE BEST OF JAPAN.

WHAT SPEED ...

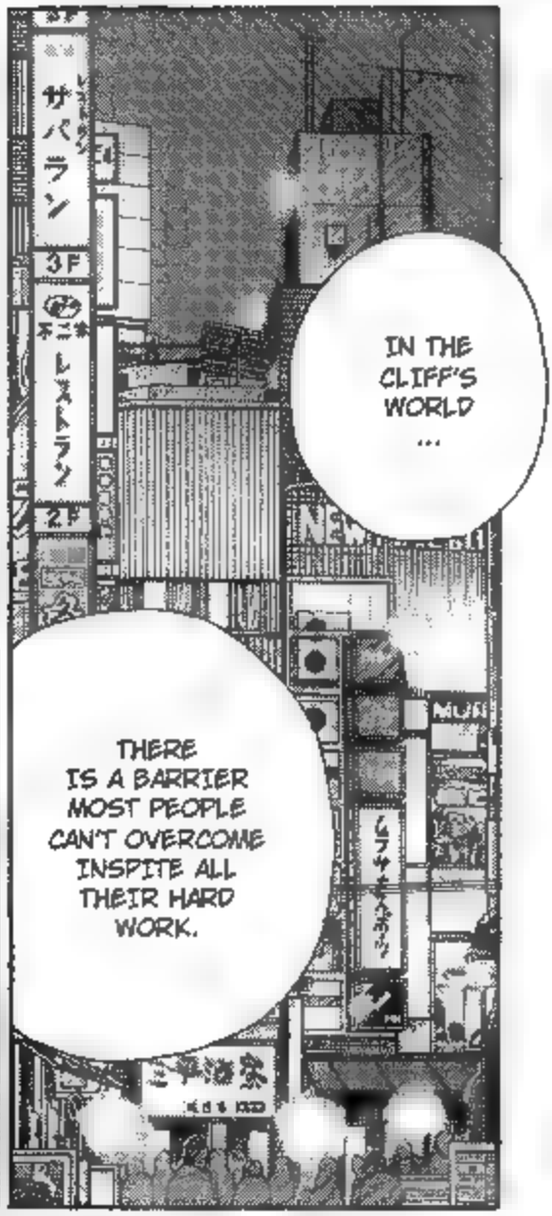
AND WHAT SENSE OF BALANCE!
HE HAS NO DIFFICULTY FINDING HIS SUPPORTS


HARD TO BELIEVE ...
IT'S THE SAME PERSON ...


IT'S INCREDIBLE

HE IS SO SLOW WHEN HE HAS TO WALK WITH A BAG ON HIS BACK, BUT HE BECOMES ANOTHER MAN WHEN HE'S CLUTCHED ON A CLIFF.

THEIR PROGRESSION IS RYTHMIC AND HARMONIOUS ...
THOSE WHO OVERCOME IT, ARE AMAZING TO WATCH. THEY'RE NOT ONLY FAST, THEY'RE ALSO GRACIOUS.


IN THE CLIFF'S WORLD ...
THERE IS A BARRIER MOST PEOPLE CAN'T OVERCOME INSPITE ALL THEIR HARD WORK.

...
I RECOGNIZE HABU WAS A GIFTED ONE.
WELL ...

HE LOOKED SO LIGHT, LIKE SLIDING ON THE ROCK ...
LIKE A BUTTERFLY.
YOU HAD TO SEE HIM CLIMB A WALL ...

GNAP
DURING THE TIME BETWEEN HIS FOURTH AND FIFTH YEAR SINCE HE JOINED THE CLUB
HE TRIED ALL THE CLIFFS HE COULD FIND. IT'S LIKE HE WAS POSSESSED.
HE USED TO SPEND 250 DAYS OF THE YEAR IN THE MOUNTAINS. IT ENTERED THE LEGEND
HE CLIMBED CLIFF AFTER CLIFF ALL THE HARDEST ONES IN JAPAN.

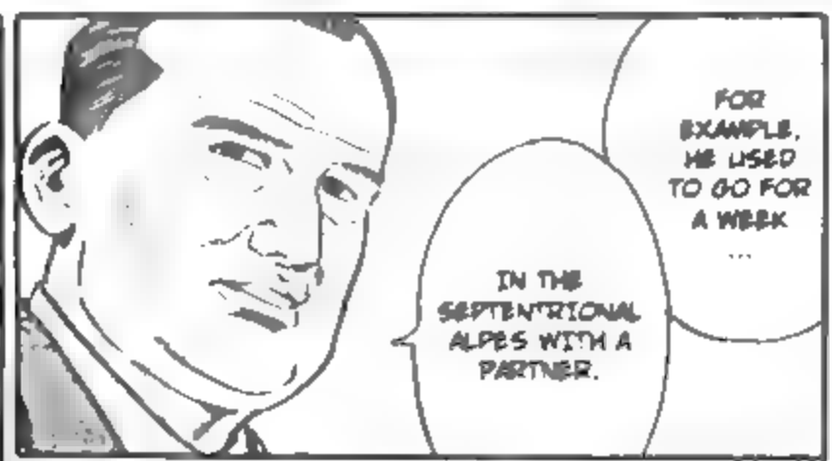
MOUNT TSUITATE'S WAY'S FAMOUS VERTICAL CLIFF.
IT IS ONE OF THE LONGEST ARTIFICIAL WAYS IN OUR COUNTRY
HOW WAS THE CORPSE'S LOAD
THE TRAIL WITHOUT SLIPPING
FWUUUSH!!
HE ALSO DID NUMEROUS FROZEN WATERFALLS AND NUMEROUS A-PICKS IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER.

WHEN WE WERE DONE WITH OUR PLANNED COURSE, HE STAYED THERE TO CLIMB MORE CLIFFS.

HE USED TO JOIN EVERY HIKING ORGANISED BY OUR CLUB.

IT WAS CHEAPER THAN GOING BACK THE SAME WAY TO TOKYO.
WE HAD TO PAY FOR ALL OUR EXPENSES, YOU KNOW.

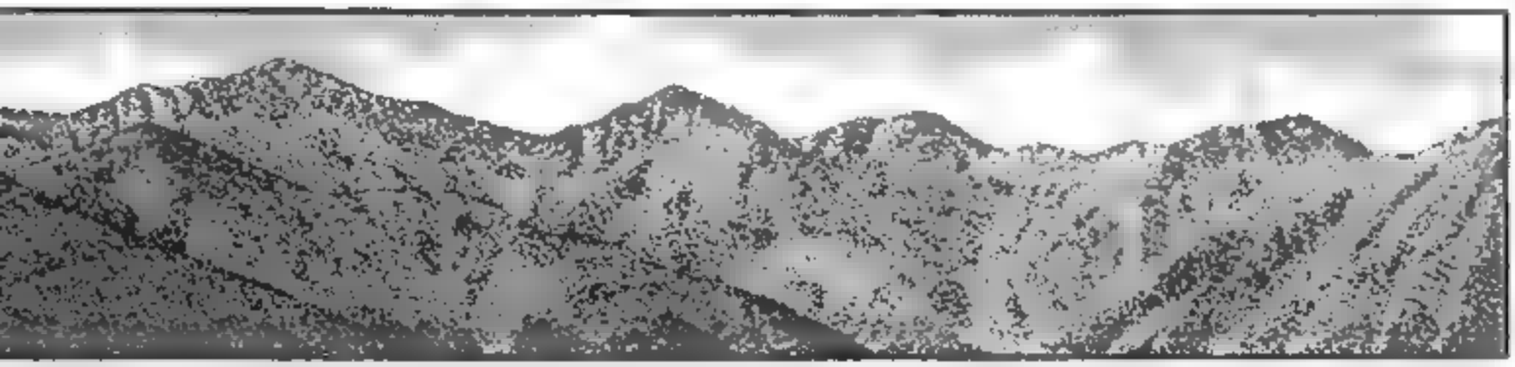
WHEN NOBODY SHOWED UP, HE STAYED TO WORK LOADING GOODS.
AND AT THE FIRST OPORTUNITY, HE WAS DOING A DIFFERENT COURSE.


FOR EXAMPLE, HE USED TO GO FOR A WEEK ...
IN THE SEPTENTRIONAL ALPES WITH A PARTNER.

AND AT THE END OF THE WEEK ...
THEY WENT BACK TO KARASAWA WHERE THEY SEPARATED, AND HABU STAYED THERE UNTIL HE FOUND A NEW COMPANION.

THE MOUNTAIN ... THAT'S ALL HE WAS THINKING ABOUT.
BESIDES IT, THERE WAS NOTHING IN HIS LIFE.

STAYING THE MAXIUM AMOUNT OF TIME IN THE MOUNTAIN ...
WAS ALL WHAT INTERESTED HABU.



SO WHAT ?

YOU'RE JOKING. WE HAVENT THE TIME TO DO ANOTHER COURSE.
WHAT ?
HEY! LET'S GO!

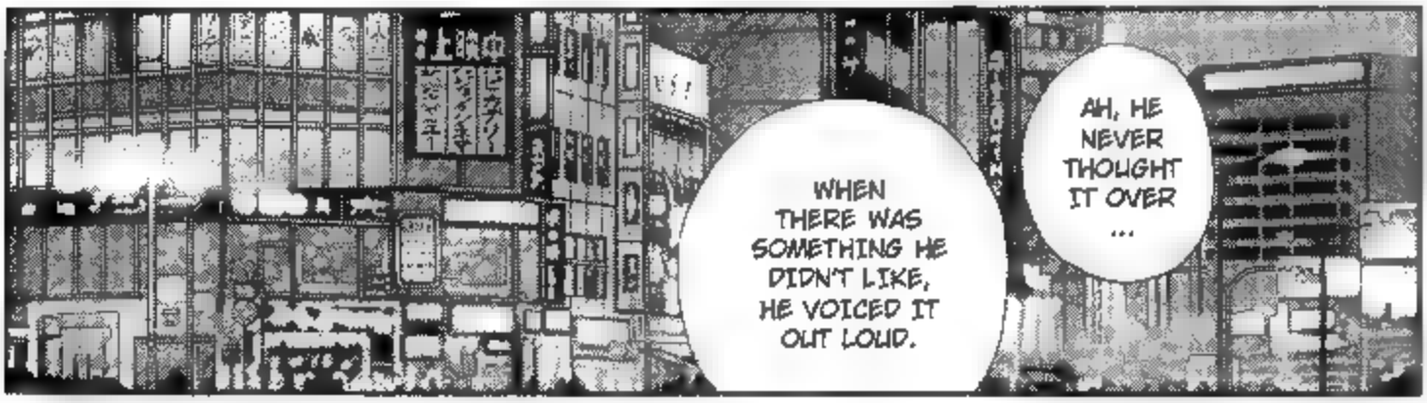
...
YOU HAVENT COME HERE TO SIT ON THE SHELTER'S BENCH!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!

I PREFER TO STAY HERE QUIETLY DURING HALF A DAY.
WELL, WE WOULD BEFORCED TO COME BACK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WAY.

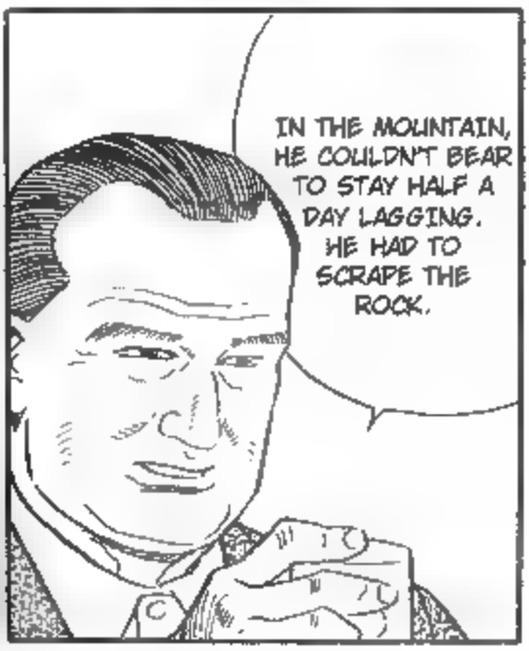
I DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE NOT COMING! I'LL GO ALONE!
AND WE'LL DO THE REST ANOTHER DAY!
HABU!

IT DOESN'T MATTER IF WE DON'T HAVE THE TIME! WE CAN STILL CLIMB A LITTLE BIT!

LET'S GO!
BUT I ...


WHEN THERE WAS SOMETHING HE DIDN'T LIKE, HE VOICED IT OUT LOUD.
AH, HE NEVER THOUGHT IT OVER ...

...
THERE WASN'T ENOUGH PEOPLE LEFT TO TEAM UP WITH HIM.
SO FOR THAT REASON ...


IN THE MOUNTAIN, HE COULDN'T BEAR TO STAY HALF A DAY LAGGING. HE HAD TO SCRAPE THE ROCK.

AH AH AH AH !

FORGET IT, MAN.

MITSUTAKI PASSAGE IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU!

THE CLUB'S MEMBERS WERE GATHERED FOR A DINNER.

THE DISCUSSION WAS VERY LIVELY ...

I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHEN ...

SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT SHOOK EVERYONE.

BY THE WAY, KIMURA ...

WHAT WOULD YOU DO ?

IT'S THE MIDDLE OF WINTER.

YOU'RE THE ONE LEADING. YOU HAVE TO BEAR ALL HIS WEIGHT.

ALONE, WITHOUT THAT OVERWEIGHT, YOU CAN MAKE IT.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?

IMAGINE THAT...

YOUR PARTNER FALLS AND STAYS HANGING ABOVE THE VOID.

IF THE SITUATION DOESN'T CHANGE, YOU'LL BOTH DIE.
HOWEVER IF YOU CUT THE CORD WHILE YOU STILL HAVE STRENGTH, YOU CAN SURVIVE.

THE PROBLEM IS...
THAT WITH YOUR PARTNER'S WEIGHT YOU CAN'T EVEN MOVE.

HEY!
HA HA HA !

SO? WHAT WOULD YOU DO ?
GOOD QUESTION ... IF YOU WERE THE ONE HANGING ON THE VOID, I WOULD NOT THINK ABOUT IT TWICE.

YEAH, IMPOSSIBLE
ESPECIALLY IF THE GUY IS YOUR FRIEND.
SAME HERE, I WOULDN'T.
I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO LIVE WITH SUCH REMORSE.

DON'T TALK SO LIGHT-LY!
THAT CORD IS OUR LIFE INSURANCE. IT'S NOT THAT EASY TO CUT IT!
MOREOVER, THE GUY HANGING IS STILL ALIVE, ISN'T HE?

I WOULDN'T CUT IT, EVEN KNOWING THAT MY LIFE DEPENDS ON IT.

I WOULD CUT IT.

*THE DIFFERENT MEALS POSTER ON THE WALL: MAKABU (GRILLED PASTA), KANPACHI(FISH), YAKI-UDON(PASTA), JAKO OROSHI(SMALL FISHES AND RADISH), MASURO NATTOU(TUNA WITH SOJA), IKA NATTOU(SQUID WITH SOJA), ETC...

AND IF YOU WERE THE ONE HANGING ON THIS VOID?
WHAT WOULD YOU THINK ?
NOTHING SPECIAL, BECAUSE THERE IS NO OTHER SOLUTION.

I PREFER TO CUT IT.
IT'S USE-LESS TO STAY HANGING AND DIE TOGETHER.

...

I WOULD CUT THE CORD. SO IF I'M THE ONE FALLING I WOULDN'T BLAME ANYONE FOR DOING THE SAME.

IF IT HAPPENS SOMEDAY ...
DON'T HESITATE.

AT FIRST, IT WAS JUST A JOKE STARTED UNDER THE EFFECTS OF A FEW GLASSES OF ALCOHOL.

I IGNORED THIS EPISODE ...

WOW
WAS SERIOUS WHEN HE SPOKE.
BUT HABU, HE...

...
IT WASN'T EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS GOING ON IN HIS HEAD ...
HMM ...

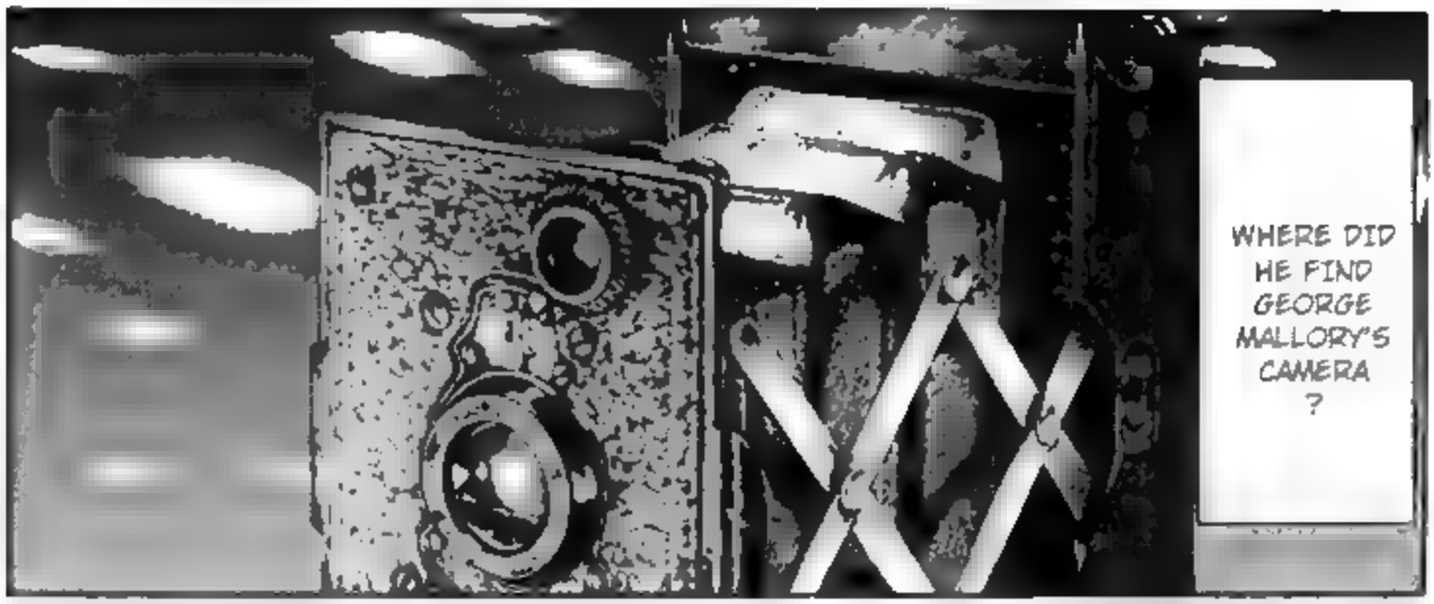
I THINK HE REALLY BELIEVED WHAT HE WAS SAYING ...

BIKHALU SANH...

EYES FROM WHERE SPOUTED OUT A GLARE OF JADE AND CHEEKS OBSCURED BY A DENSE BEARD ...

WHAT MYSTERY WAS HIDDEN BEHIND THIS STARE?

WHAT WAS HABU DOING AT KATMANDOU ?


WHERE DID HE FIND GEORGE MALLORY'S CAMERA ?

WHILE INVESTIGATING HABU'S PAST, FUKAMACHI HOPED TO FIND ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS OSESSING HIM.
COTTAGE

HABU JOUJI ...
HE HAD THE PREMONITION THAT HE WOULD SEE THAT MAN AGAIN.

Scanned by vensu
Translated by kal
Edited by vensu
Checked by Baha

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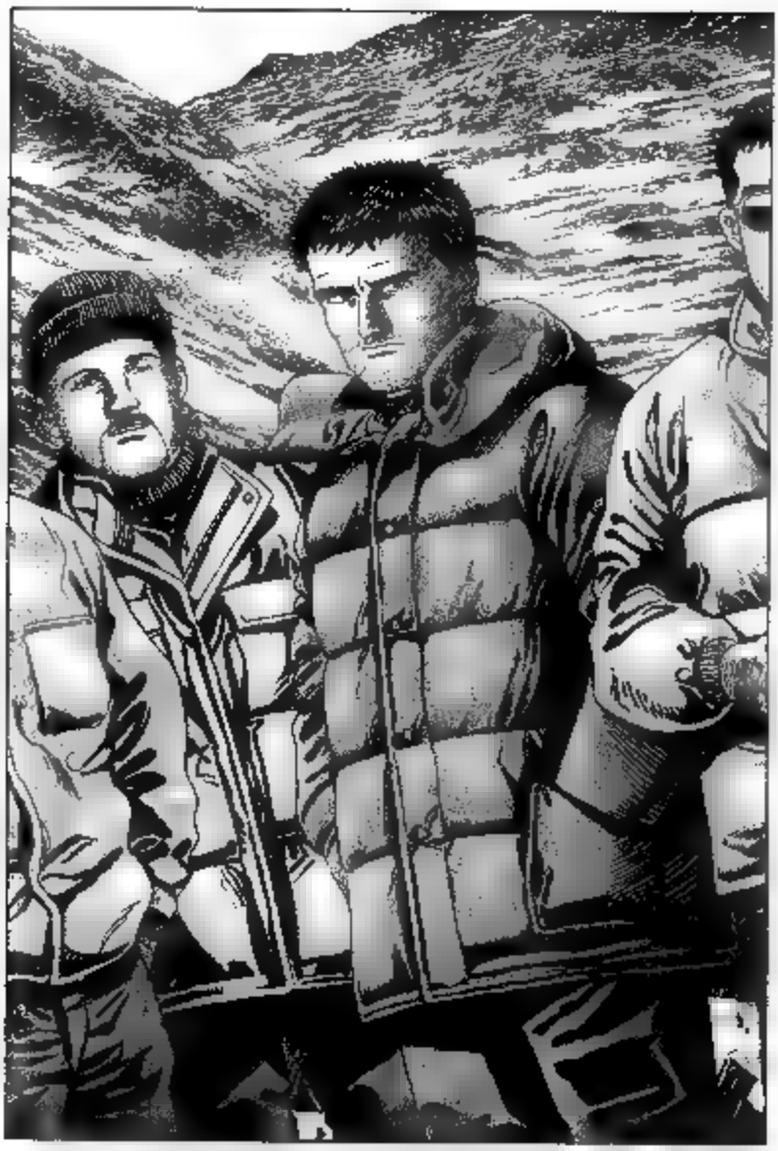
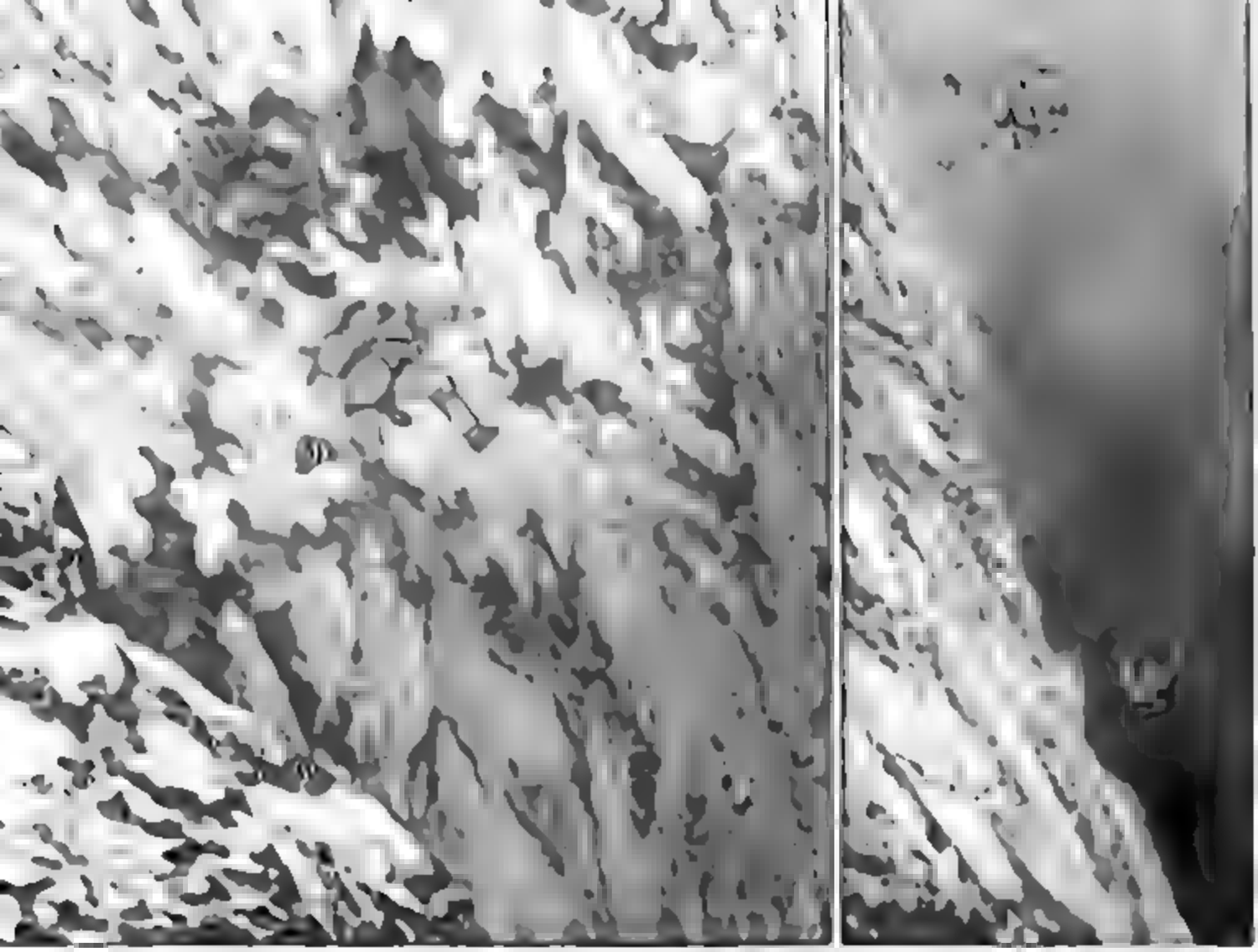


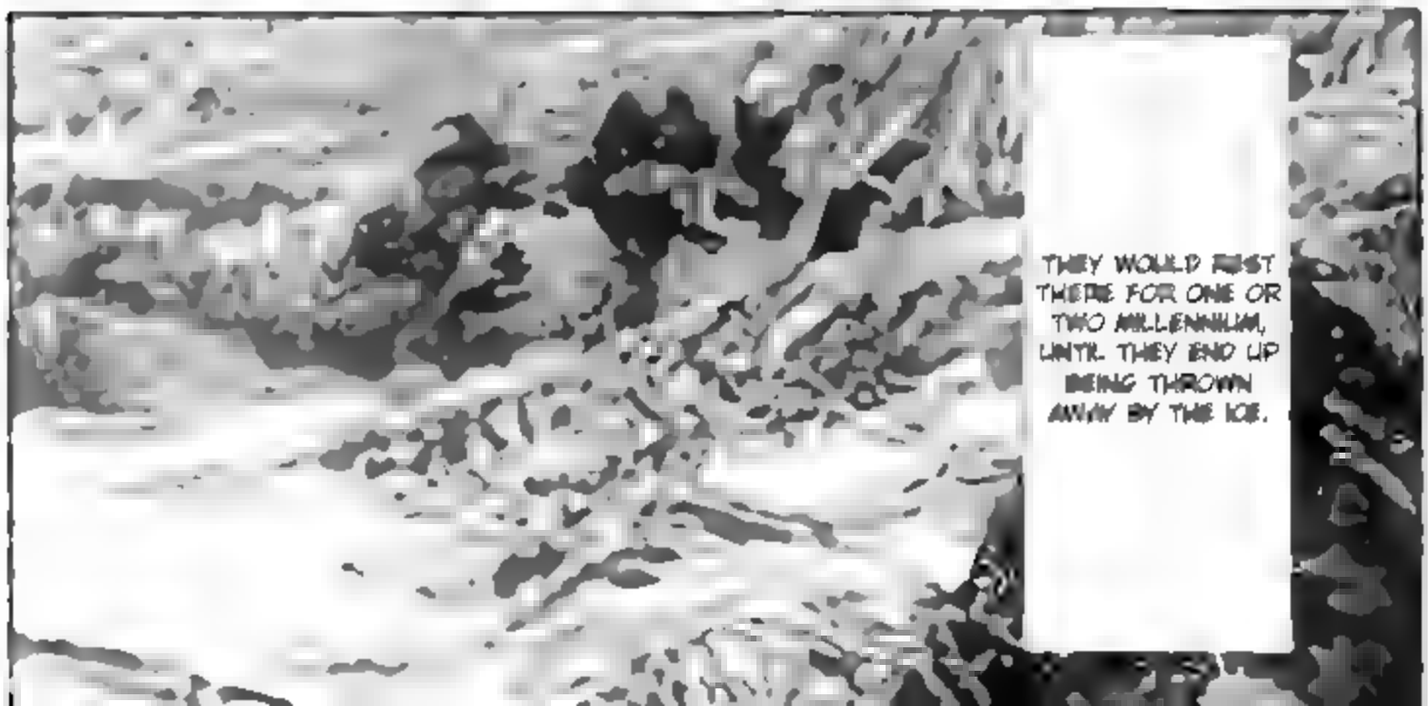
Chapter 4 :
Oni-Sura

FUKAMACHI WAS WONDERING ABOUT HIS OWN BEHAVIOUR ... WHY DID HE WANT TO RETURN TO SEE HARU AGAIN?

FWAAAAH
HE SUDDENLY REMEMBERED ANOTHER SCENE ONE WHICH HAD LEFT A DEEP IMPRESSION ON HIS MIND



CLIMBERS
WERE STILL


THEY WOULD REST THERE FOR ONE OR TWO MILLENNIUM, UNTIL THEY END UP BEING THROWN AWAY BY THE ICE.

HE WOULD
THE
MOUNTAIN
FOREVER

IF HE
DECIDED TO
ERASE HABU
JOUJI AND

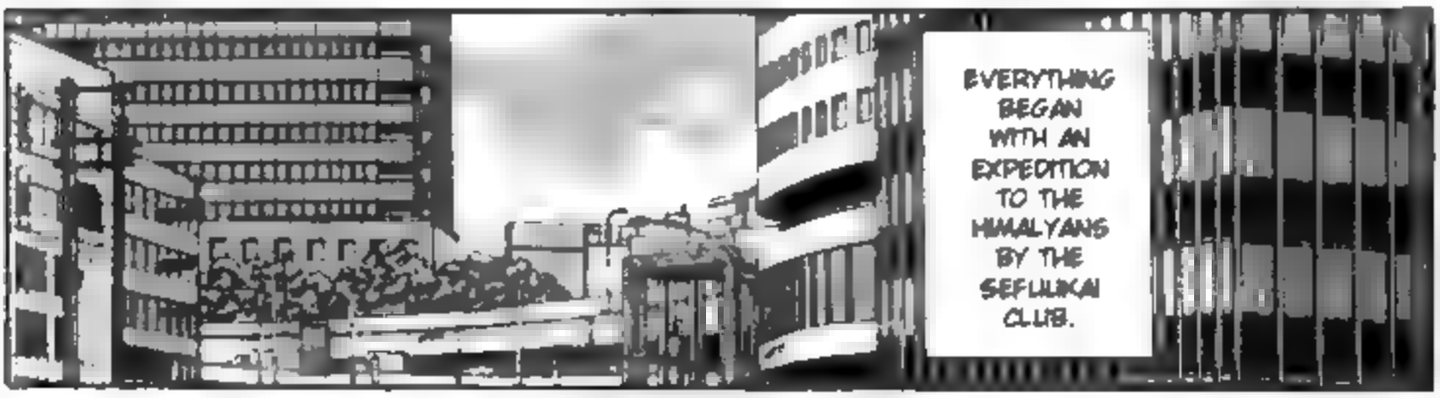
STOP

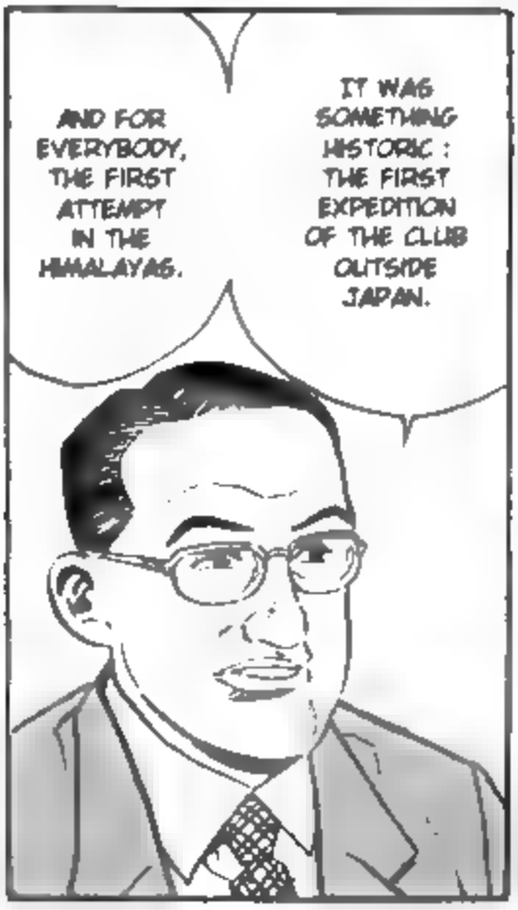
HABU JOUJI AND MALLORY'S CAMERA

THEY ARE THE LINKS WHICH STILL JOINED HIM WITH THE MOUNTAIN AT THAT MOMENT.

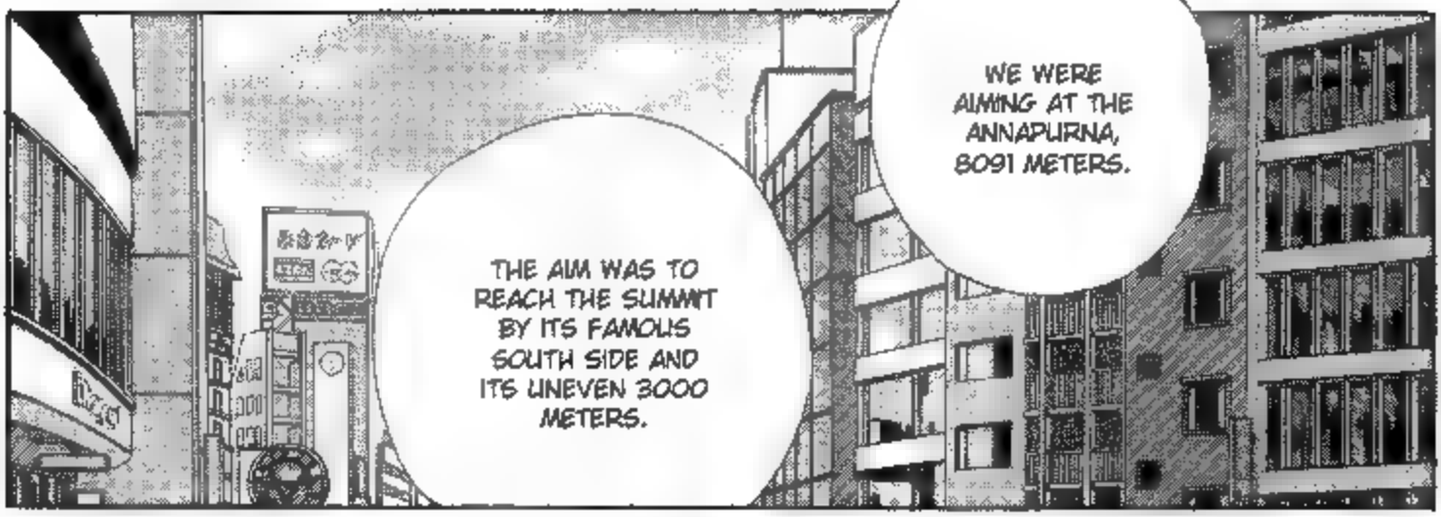
Finished!!

tuuuurtt
tuuuurtt
tuuuurtt
IT WAS ■ 1970, AT THE AGE OF 26 YEARS OLD, THAT HABU ACHIEVED AN EXPLOIT WHICH MADE HIM ENTER THE LEGEND AND ALLOWED HIM TO LET HIS NAME IN JAPANESE'S HISTORY OF ALPINISM.


EVERYTHING BEGAN WITH AN EXPEDITION TO THE HIMALYANS BY THE SEFUURKAI CLUB.


AND FOR EVERYBODY, THE FIRST ATTEMPT IN THE HIMALAYAS.
IT WAS SOMETHING HISTORIC : THE FIRST EXPEDITION OF THE CLUB OUTSIDE JAPAN.

FUKAMICHI HAD TAKEN AN APPOINTMENT WITH INOUE MAKIO, A MEMBER OF THE SEFUURKAI CLUB WHO HAD BEEN MANY TIMES HABU'S CLIMBING PARTNER
YES, INDEED ...


THE AIM WAS TO REACH THE SUMMIT BY ITS FAMOUS SOUTH SIDE AND ITS UNEVEN 3000 METERS.
WE WERE AIMING AT THE ANNAPURNA, 8091 METERS.

WE WERE BOTH OUT OF MONEY

BECAUSE HE COULDN'T.
FOR WHAT REASON DIDN'T HABU TAKE PART ■ THIS EXPEDITION ?
BUT ...

THERE WAS ALSO THE CLUB'S FUNDS, BUT ...
IT WASN'T THAT MUCH.
FINALLY, THE MEMBERS OF THE EXPEDITION HAD TO PAY MOST OF IT BY THEMSELVES.

YOU DID HAVE A FEW OF THEM, RIGHT ?
AND THE SPONSORS ?

BUT THEY WERE TAKING ONLY ONE FIFTH OF THE COSTS.
IT'S TRUE.

YOU ALSO HAD TO TAKE 4 MONTHS OF HOLIDAYS IN A ROW. IT WAS NOT EASY.
BUT, BESIDES THE FINANCIAL QUESTION ...

AROUND ONE MILLION YEN PER PERSON.
ONLY THOSE WHO COULD PAY SUCH A SUM COULD TAKE PART ■ THE TRIP.

ON THIS POINT, IT WAS NOT A PROBLEM FOR HIM.
HABU DID NOT HAVE A STABLE JOB.

...

DURING THIS PERIOD, ONE MILLION YEN WAS QUITE A SUM.
IT REPRESENTED AROUND 6 MONTHS OF PAY.
HABU WENT DOOR TO DOOR, BUT HE WAS ONLY ABLE TO COLLECT ONE THIRD OF THE SUM.

BUT ...
HE DID NOT HAVE MONEY.

FINALLY, HE DID NOT HAVE ANY OTHER CHOICE BUT TO RENOUNCE THE EXPEDITION ON THE ANNAPURNA.

HE TOOK IT BAD.

GLOUB

GLOUB

IT'S TOO UNFAIR !

IT'S NOT NORMAL !

SLAM

PWAAA !

THEN WHY CAN THEY GO AND I CAN'T ?!

PHYSICALLY AND TECHNICALLY, I'M WAY BETTER!

WHY IS IT LIKE THAT, ITOU-SAN ?!

IS IT ENOUGH TO HAVE MONEY AND SO ANY BACKPACKER CAN GO OVER THERE?!

IT IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR THE CLUB!
WE HAVE TO SCALE IT, THAT SUMMIT !
TRUE, YOU'RE TOTALLY RIGHT, BUT ...

HABU ...

THIS EXPEDITION DOESN'T MAKE SENSE IF IT DOES NOT SUCCEED !

DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING ?!

WHAT'S THE USE FOR THEM TO GO THERE? THEY'RE WORTHLESS!
BUT WHAT! IT'S ME WHO SHOULD GO INSTEAD OF YAMAUCHI OR DONO, FOR EXAMPLE !
HABU!

ENOUGH, HABU!
IF YOU CAN'T PAY, THEN YOU STAY HERE, THAT'S ALL !
BUT THEY CAN GO THERE BECAUSE THEY HAVE MONEY. IT'S NOT NORMAL.
TECHNICALLY, THEY'RE BAD ...

I'M JUST TELLING THE TRUTH.
I...

ONLY ITOU UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS HIS IRRATIONAL LOVE FOR THE MOUNTAINS THAT PUSHED HIM TO MAKE SUCH COMMENTS.

NOBODY IN THE CLUB APPROVED OF HIS BEHAVIOUR SO THEY KEPT THEIR DISTANCE FROM HIM.

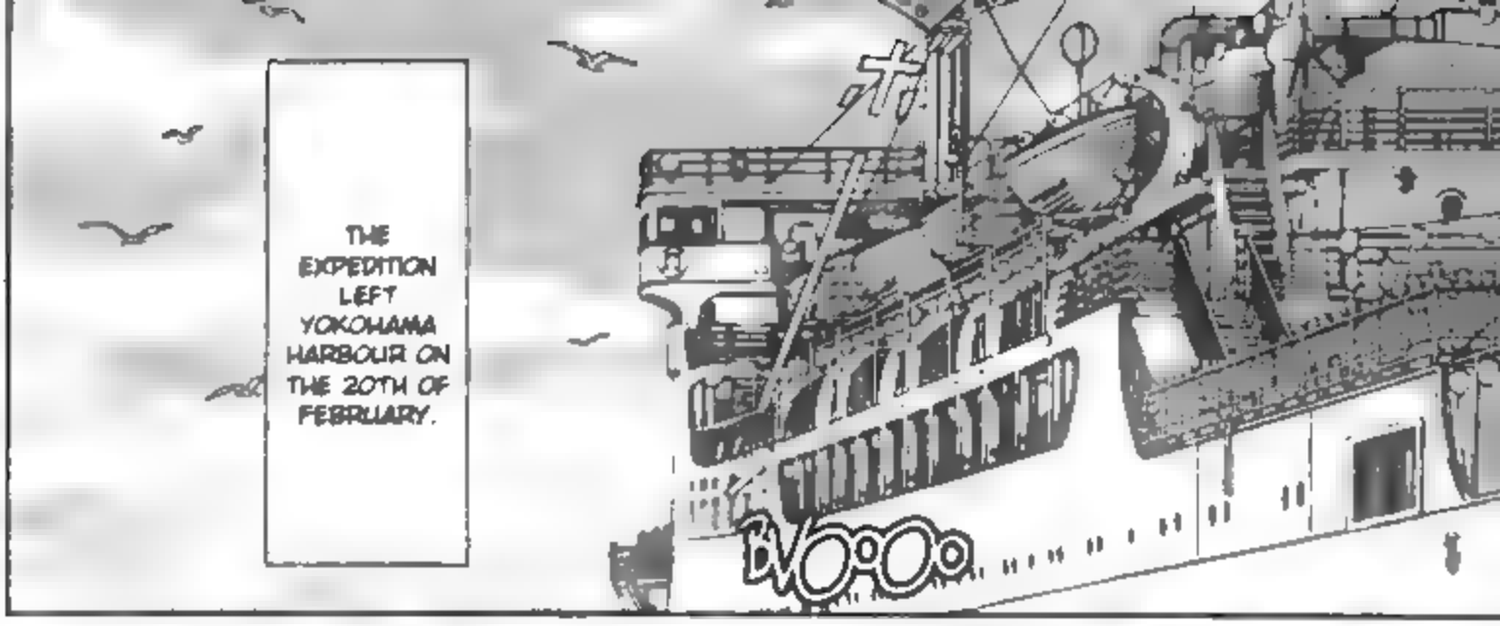
MEAN-WHILE ...

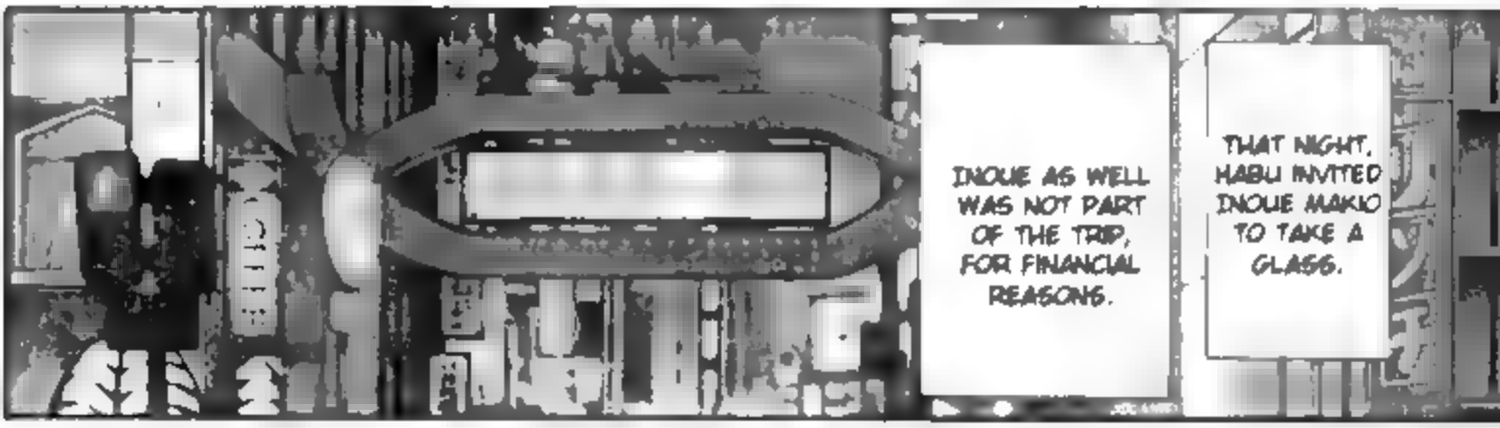
WHAT'S UP WITH HIM AGAIN ?
IT'S GETTING ANNOYING!

A DOZEN DAYS BEFORE THE EXPEDITION'S DEPARTURE, HABU BECAME QUIET.
HE DIDN'T GO OUT DRINKING WITH THE OTHERS. HE JUST SILENTLY HELPED WITH THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE TRIP.

I WONDER WHAT HE IS UP TO.

HE WAS SO UPSET LAST TIME.
WHO KNOWS ...


THE EXPEDITION LEFT YOKOHAMA HARBOUR ON THE 20TH OF FEBRUARY.


INOUE AS WELL WAS NOT PART OF THE TRIP, FOR FINANCIAL REASONS.
THAT NIGHT, HABU INVITED INOUE MAKIO TO TAKE A GLASS.

THOSE WHO POSSESS IT CAN GO TO EUROPE OR THE HIMALAYAS.

AFTER ALL, MONEY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.

...
300円
FOR ME, THE MOUNTAINS CONSUMES MY LIFE!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING!

THE MOUTAINS ARE JUST A HOBBY AFTER ALL
WHAT DO YOU WANT ...
GLOUB

HABU ...
HOWEVER, IT'S PEOPLE WHO DON'T EVEN SPEND 50 DAYS PER YEAR ALONE ■ THE MOUNTAINS THAT SCALE THE HIMALAYAN PEAKS.
DO YOU FIND IT NORMAL, INOUE ?!

...

I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE PARTING FROM IT FOR EVEN A DAY.
IT'S ALL I'VE GOT.

...
WE WOULD HAVE SPONSORS THAT WOULD GIVE US MONEY!
IF WE WERE FAMOUS ...

ALL OF THIS, IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE UNKNOWN !

TO HAVE A NAME ...
IT'S NOT DIFFICULT : YOU HAVE TO ACHIEVE SOMETHING THAT NOBODY DID BEFORE!

ONI-SURA ?
YES, ONI-SURA DURING WINTER.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME WITH ME ?

WOULD YOU COME WITH ME TO ONI-SURA ?
SAY, INOUE !

...!

THAT'S MADNESS

I'M TALKING SERIOUSLY.

HABU ...
ARE YOU DRUNK OR WHAT ?
NO.

250 円
ONI-SURA DURING WINTER, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
...
IT'S SUICIDE.

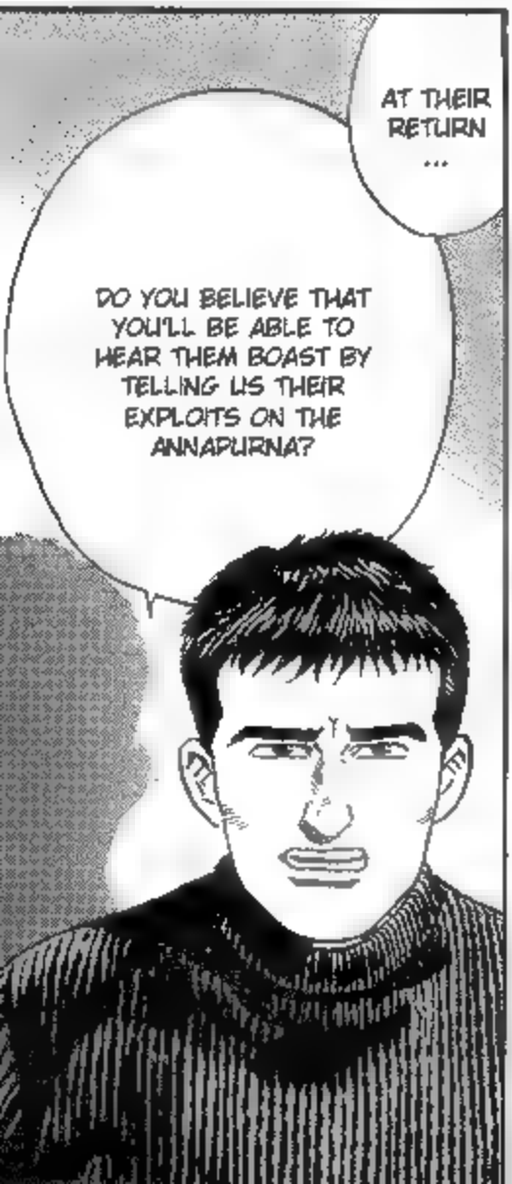
ONI-SURA
THIS NAME COMES FROM THE CONTRACTION OF ONIGOROSHI NO SURABU, "THE PAVING STONE WHERE DEMONS KILL THEMSELVES". AN IMPRACTICABLE CLIFF THAT EVEN DEMONS CAN'T CLIMB ...
WOOOOOOOM

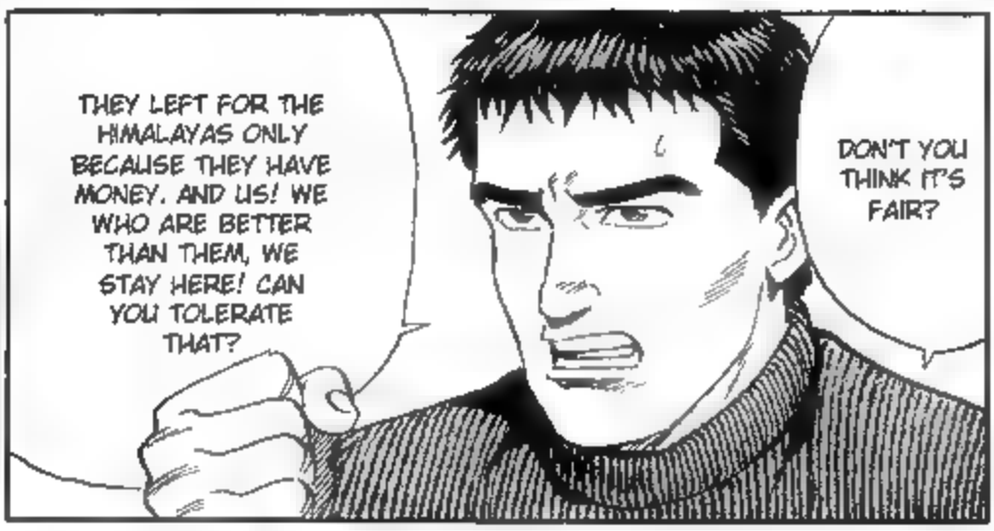
ZWAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!
ZWAAAAAAAAA!!
TILL THEN, NOBODY HAD EVER DARED TO SCALE THOSE CLIFFS DURING WINTER. ONI-SURA WAS
CLIFFS YOU CAN FIND IN JAPAN.
THE PLACE IS FAMOUS FOR ITS AVALANCHES THAT RESULTS FROM THE SNOW THAT
THE AREA

NO! WE CAN DO IT! LET'S GO!

...
I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
IT'LL BE WITHOUT ME.

HABU ...
一杯250円
I WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO BEAR IT!
NO WAY TO RENOUNCE!
GRIP


AT THEIR RETURN ...
DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HEAR THEM BOAST BY TELLING US THEIR EXPLOITS ON THE ANNAPURNA?


THEY LEFT FOR THE HIMALAYAS ONLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE MONEY. AND US! WE WHO ARE BETTER THAN THEM, WE STAY HERE! CAN YOU TOLERATE THAT?
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S FAIR?

...
TOGETHER, WE CAN DO SOME-THING EVEN BETTER THAN SCALING THE HIMALAYAS!
BAM!
WITH BOTH OF US ...

...
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF YOUR LIFE ...
... WITHOUT THE MOUNTAIN ?

INOUE ...

FOR ME, IT WOULD BE A LIFE NOT WORTH LIVING.
I'D RATHER BE CARRIED AWAY BY AN AVALANCHE ...
...THAN STAYING HERE WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING!

IT WAS THE CASE FOR THE DEATH OF HIS PARENTS. IT WAS ALSO THE CASE FOR THIS EXPEDITION TO HIMALAYAS, AND IT'D BE AGAIN ON THE EVEREST LATER...
HABU WAS NOT ABLE TO ACCEPT PAIN CONNECTED TO A DISAPPOINTMENT.

GLOUB

IN HIS BABYISH DEFIANCE TO DISSIPATE HIS SUFFERING BY ACCEPTING THINGS AS THEY WERE, HE SEEMED OBLIVIOUS AT TIMES ...

HIS SUFFERING DRAGGED HIM DOWN. HE JUST COULDN'T LET HIMSELF BE FORGIVEN TO FORGET.

THIS CLIFF IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO CLIMB, ALTHOUGH SOME CONDITIONS MUST BE FUL-FILLED.

I AM NOT PROPOSING THIS TO YOU ON A WHIM.

TRUST ME, I HAVE THOUGHT LONG AND HARD ABOUT ONI-SURA.

...

LISTEN UP.

DURING THE WINTER, IT HAPPENS THAT SOMETIMES ON CERTAIN DAYS, THE TEMPERATURE RISES A FEW DEGREES.

INOUE ASKED THE QUESTION UNCONSCIOUSLY.

AND WHAT ARE THOSE CONDITIONS ?

AND THE NEXT DAY ...

... WE'LL ONLY HAVE TO REACH THE SUMMIT BEFORE THE TEMPERATURE RISES.

WE MUST HAVE A CLEAR SKY WITH A GOOD MOON.

WE'LL ENTER BY THE BASE OF TAKIZAWA MOUNT, THEN WE'LL BIVOUAC AT THE END OF AFTERNOON.

WITH THE GOOD WEATHER, THE SUN WILL MELT THE SNOW AND WILL CLEAR THE PATH.

WE'LL ONLY NEED TO SET UP CAMP AT THE ENTRY POINT AND WAIT TILL ALL THE CONDITIONS ARE MET.

...

I'VE ALREADY SCALED THIS CLIFF MANY TIMES DURING THE SUMMER.

WITH THE REVERBERATION OF THE SNOW AND OUR CAP LAMP, WE SHOULD NOT HAVE ANY PROBLEMS TO CLIMB DURING NIGHT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? SHALL WE DO IT?

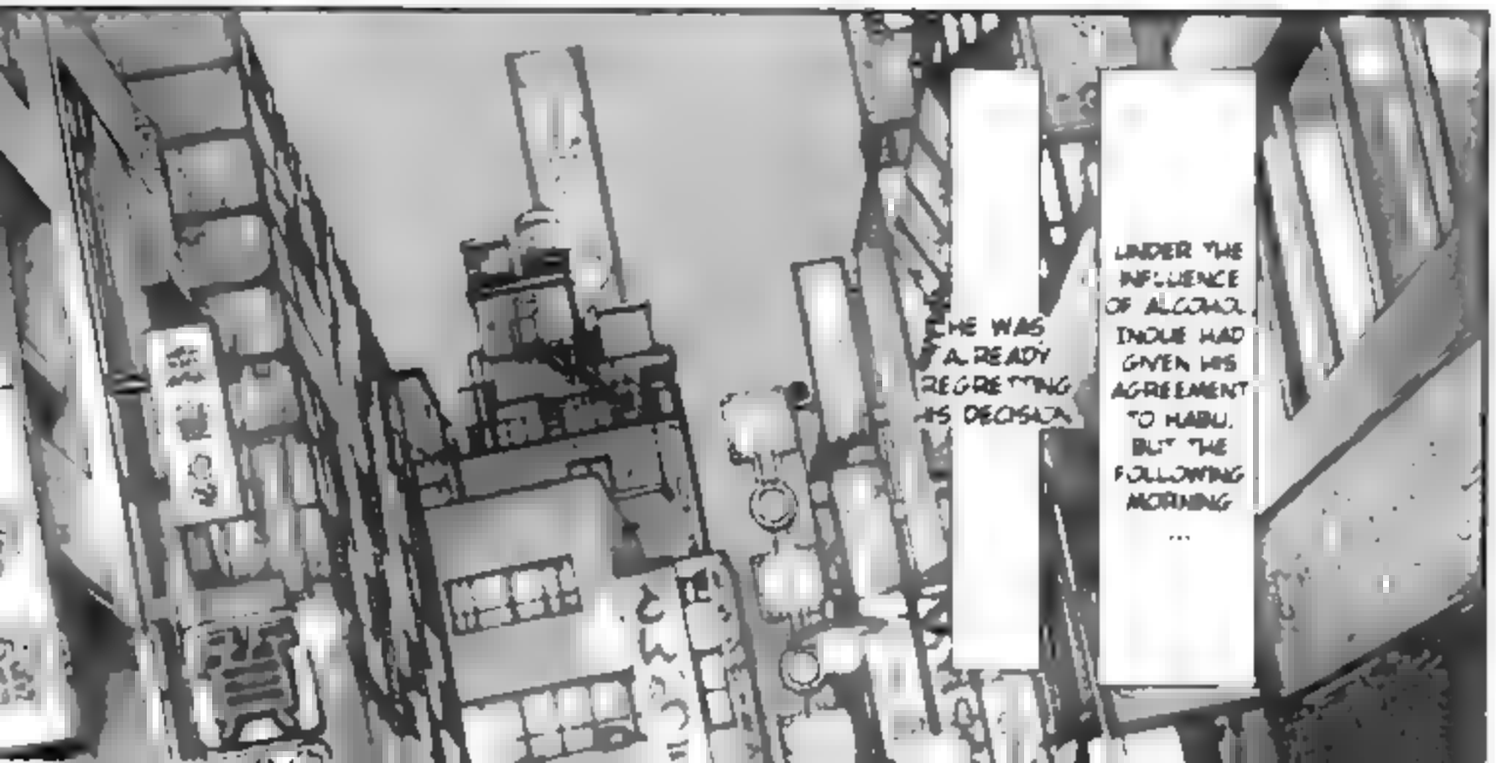
THEN, DURING THE NIGHT, THE SNOW WILL FREEZE, AND THUS, WON'T CAUSE AN AVALANCHE.

FOR SURE.
THIS IS AN EXPLOIT WHICH DESERVES A MEDAL.
THE FIRST ASCENT OF ONI-SURA IN WINTER ...

BY LISTENING TO HABU, INOUE WAS BEGINNING TO THINK THAT AFTER ALL, IT WAS NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

NOT BAD ...
IF WE SUCCEED IN DOING IT, OUR NAMES WILL STAY IN JAPANESE CLIMBING HISTORY FOREVER!

WHY NOT ...
YEAH ...
LET'S GO, INOUE!


HE WAS ALREADY REGRETTING HIS DECISION.
UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL, INOUE HAD GIVEN HIS AGREEMENT TO HABU. BUT THE FOLLOWING MORNING ...

Scanned by vensu
Translated by Kabuto
Edited by vensu
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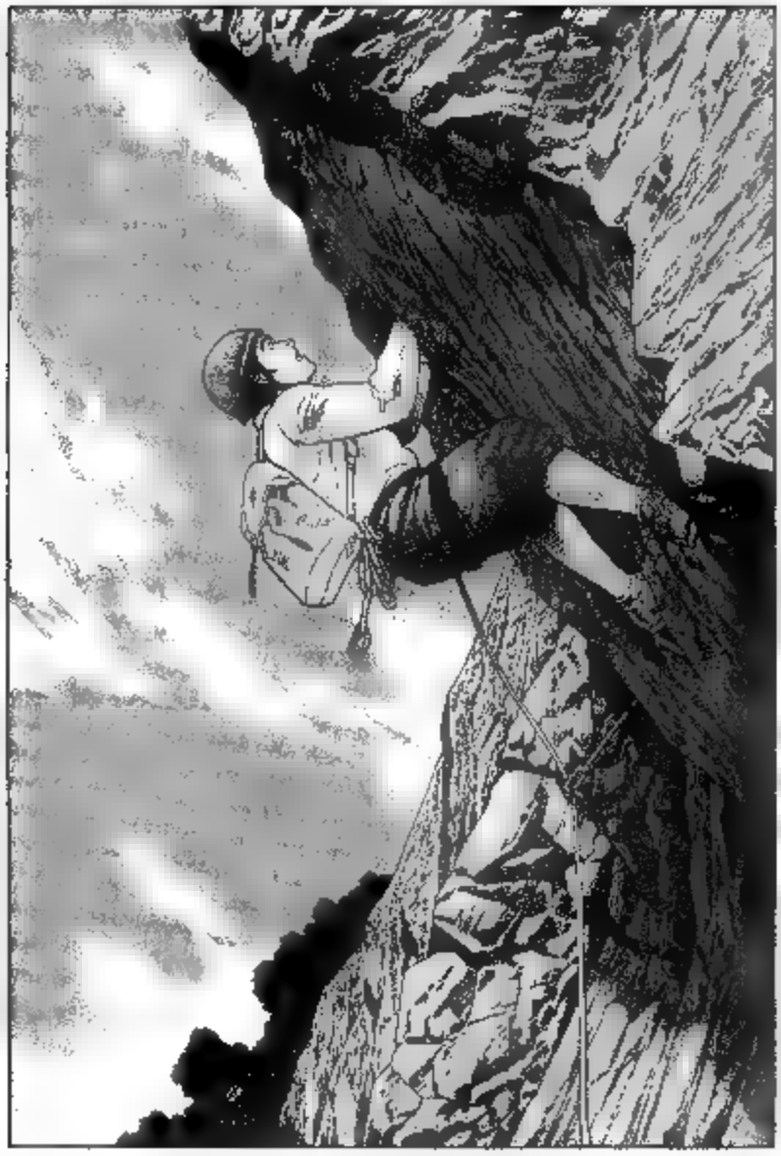
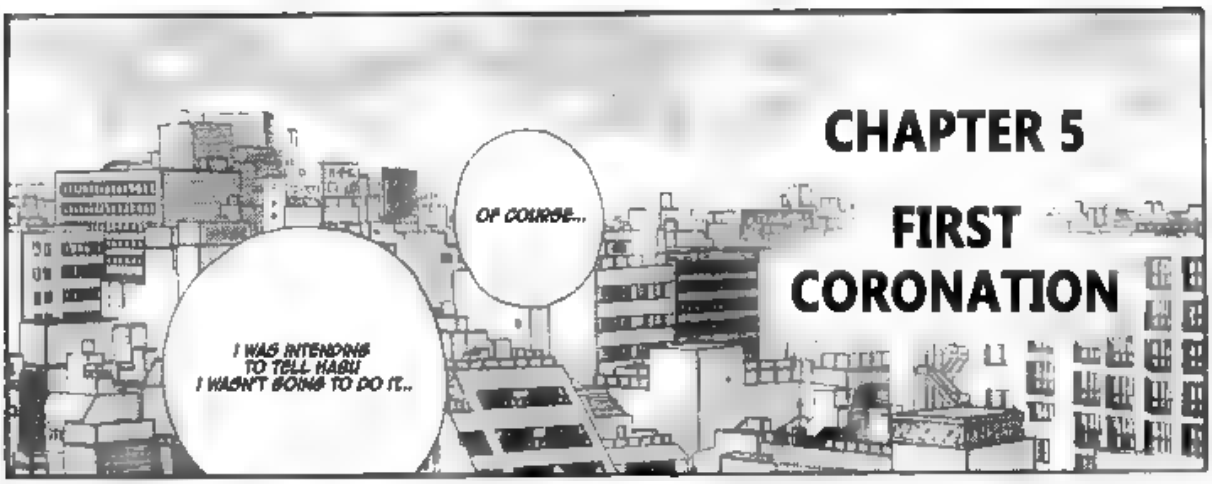
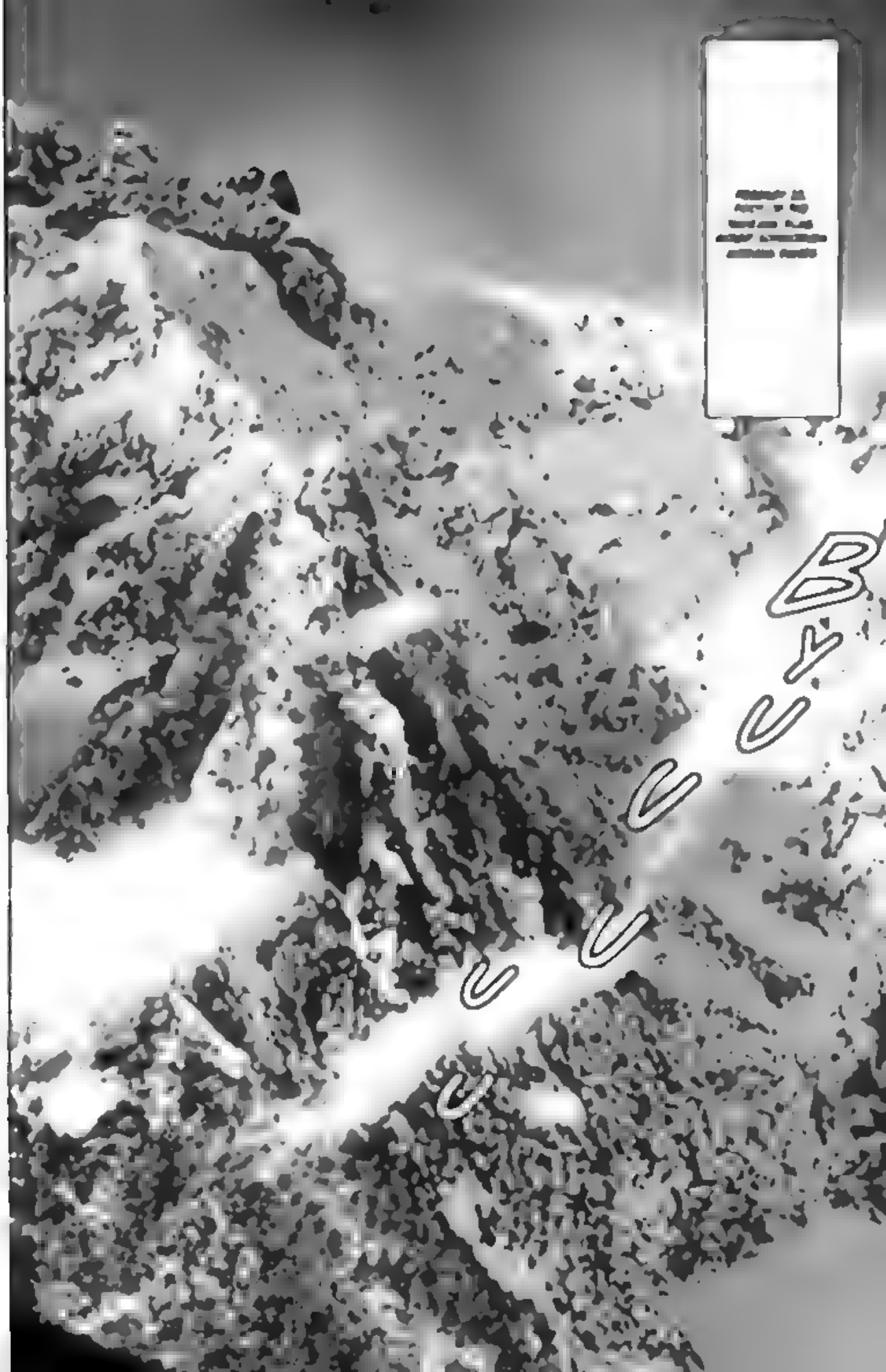


CHAPTER 5

FIRST CORONATION





2:00 PM... HABU AND INOUE TAKE UP THE DIRECT ROUTE FROM THE LOWER PART OF DAIZAWA.
THE CONDITION OF THE WALLS GOOD FOR US TODAY!
ALL RIGHT! LET'S HIT IT, INOUE!
ZA ZA ZA ZA
ZA ZA ZA ZA
ZA ZA ZA

BRAAAA

ZA ZA ZA ZA
THE BULK OF THE SNOW HAD FALLEN THE DAY BEFORE, BUT THE POWDERY AVALANCHES WERE NEVER-ENDING.

THE AVALANCHE CAME PRACTICALLY ON SCHEDULE.
ZA A A

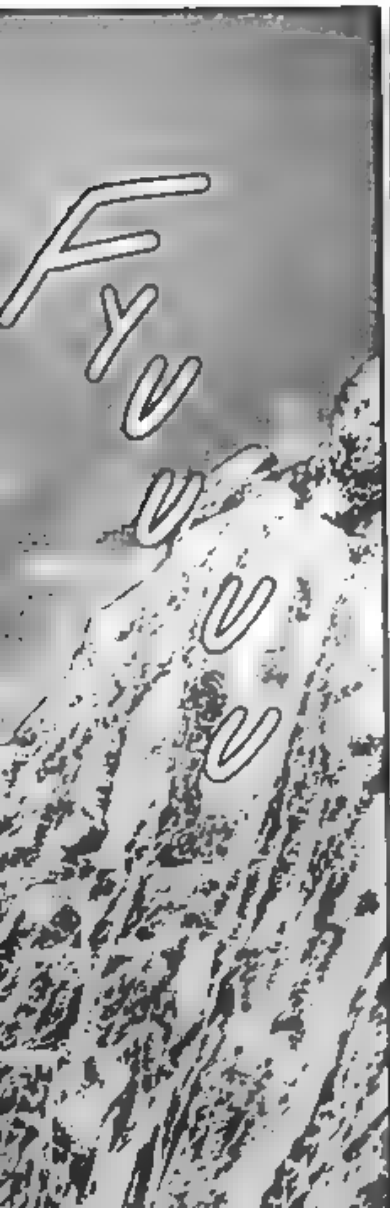
THIS WHOLE DAY AKIRA INOUE KEPT THINKING TO THE BITTER END. LET'S GIVE UP. LET'S TURN BACK.
PFFFUUU

TWO HOURS FROM THE STARTING POINT.
THEY FAGGED OUT OF LOWER TAKIZAWA.

SHO FIN THEY CAME UP BENEATH AN OVERHANG

AFTERWARDS, HAGU WENT AT A EVEN MORE HEIGHTENED PITCH.
GRAC

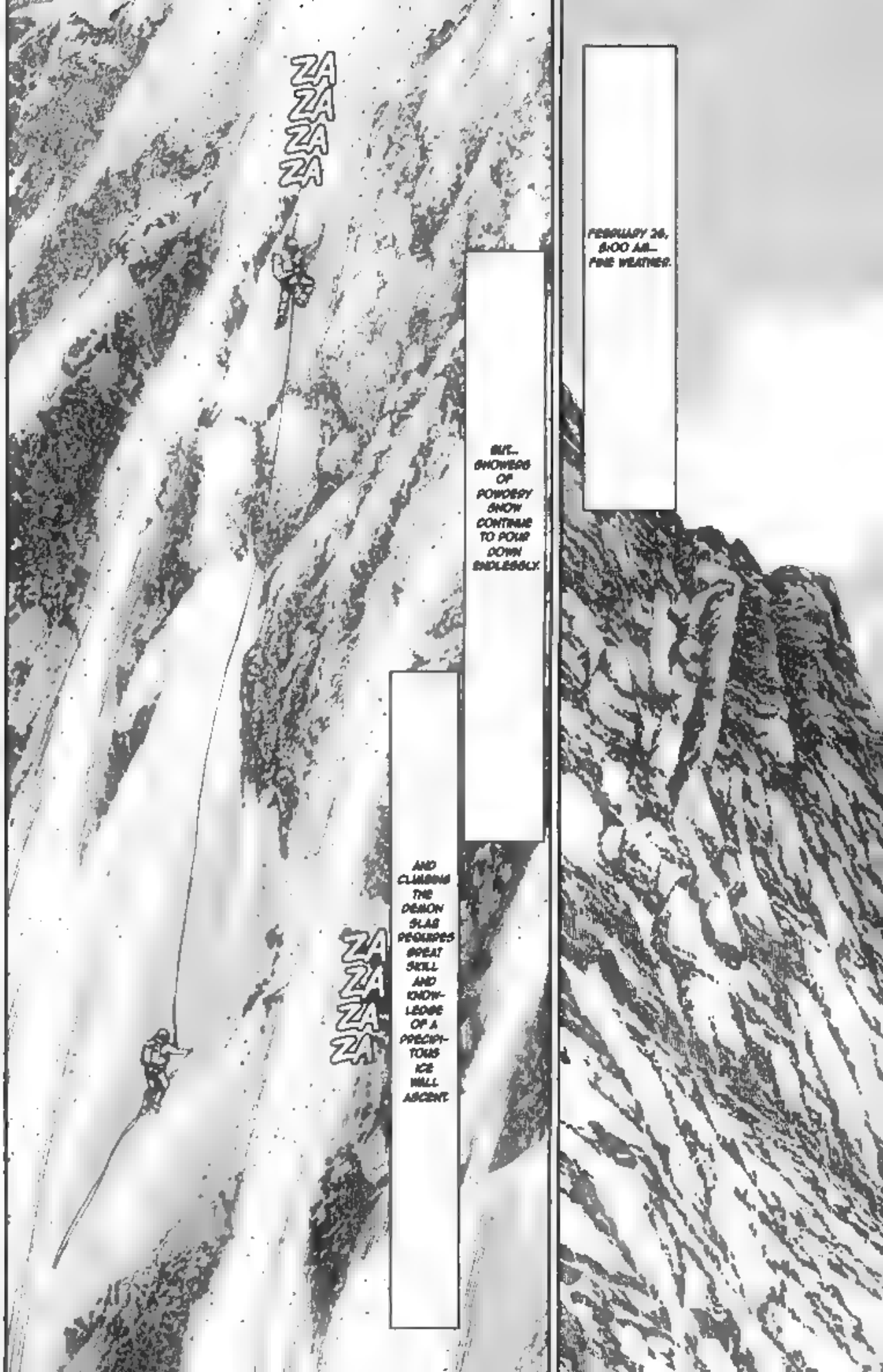
GRAC


FYUUUU

HAA
HAA
WE'LL SET UP THE BIVOUAC HERE TODAY.
IF, BY ANY CHANCE, AN AVALANCHE SHOULD HAPPEN, THERE'S NO WORRY ABOUT GETTING BURIED BY IT HERE

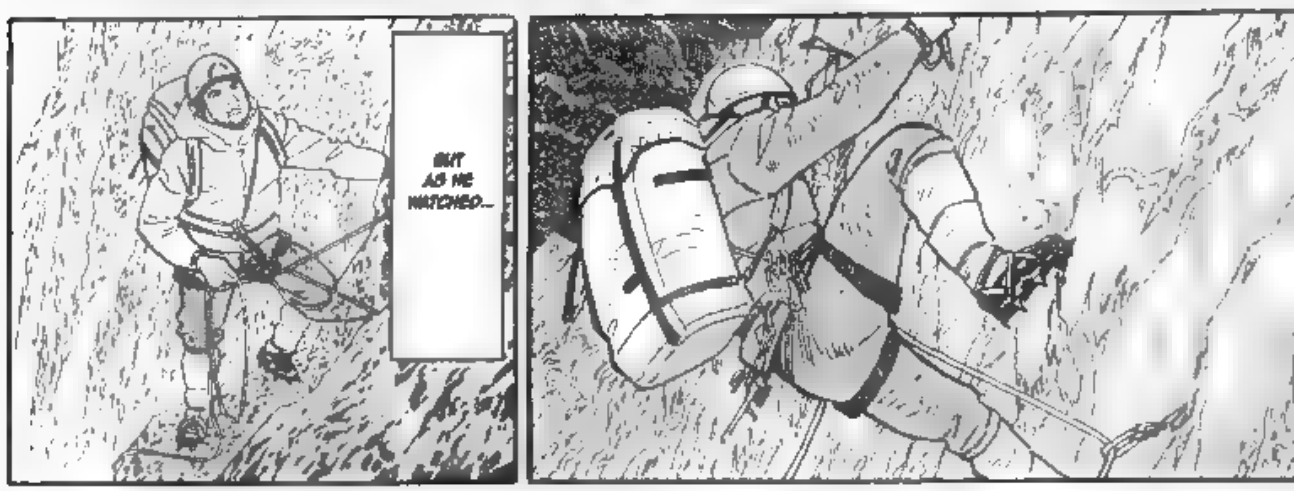
IF IT'S CLEAR, THEN MAKE NO MISTAKE - WE CAN CLIMB IT.

THE START DEPENDS ON THE WEATHER.
TOMORROW MORNING WE GET OUT EARLY.


FEBRUARY 24, 8:00 AM.— FINE WEATHER.
BUT... SHOWERS OF POWDERY SNOW CONTINUE TO POUR DOWN ENDLESSLY.
ZA ZA ZA ZA
AND CLIMBING THE DEMON SLAB REQUIRES GREAT SKILL AND KNOW-LEDGE OF A PRECIPI-TOUS ICE WALL ASCENT.
ZA ZA ZA ZA

THEN A 60 METER ICE CASCADE WHICH WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF THE CLIMB.
150 METERS OF SNOW WALL, 30 METERS OF ICE WALL, 120 METERS OF SNOW WALL.
GRAG
HAH
HAH
HAH
AT THE UPPER END OF THE ICE CASCADE LOOMS A DARK, BLACK OVERHANG
GRAG

FAR TOO DANGEROUS.
EVEN IF THEY MANAGED TO GET PAST THIS OVERHANG, THEY WOULD BE BESET BY AVALANCHES ABOVE – IT WAS DANGEROUS.
ZA ZA ZA ZA ZA
I KNEW IT – THIS IS AS FAR AS WE GET. ENOUE THOUGHT.


BUT AS HE WATCHED...

HABU...
HABU TRAVERSED THE OVERHANG.

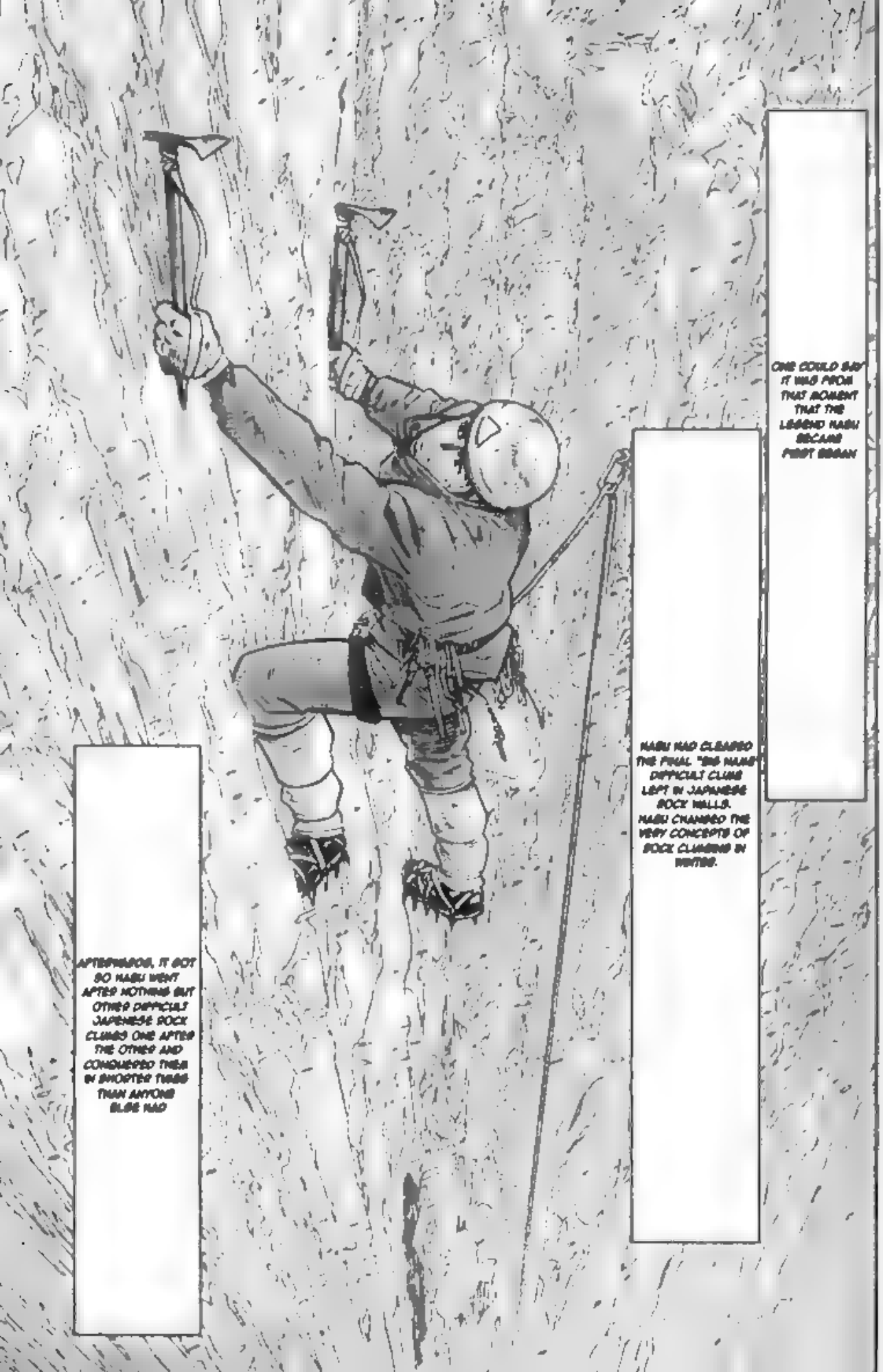
IT WAS HABU'S INBORN INSTINCTS WHICH DISCOVERED THIS TRAVERSE ROUTE AND HAD WON THEM VICTORY
THIS WAS THE WHOLE KEY TO THE FIRST WINTER CLIMB OF THE DEMON BLAB
AFTERWARDS, THOUGH THEY WERE STRUCK BY AVALANCHES, THEY CLIMBED THROUGH THIS SNOW WALL
HAH
HAH

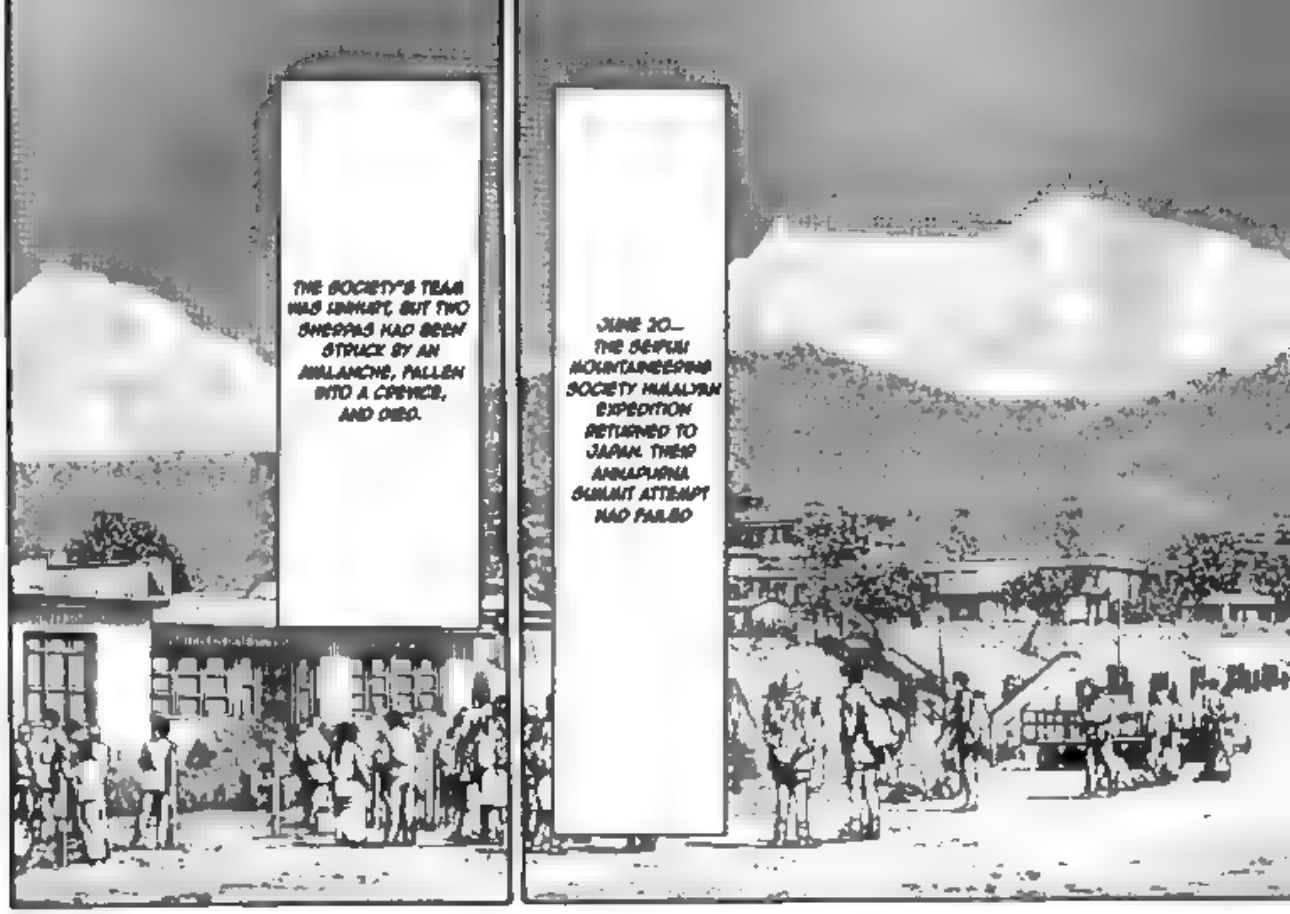
BYUUUUUU
THE FIRST EVER WINTER CLIMB OF THE NUMBER 3 SLAB OF TAKIZAWA ON ICHINOKURASAWA.
6:10 PM... THE END OF THE HABU AND INOUE'S LONG STRUGGLE. THEY ARRIVE AT THE BASE BAND OF THE DOME WALL.

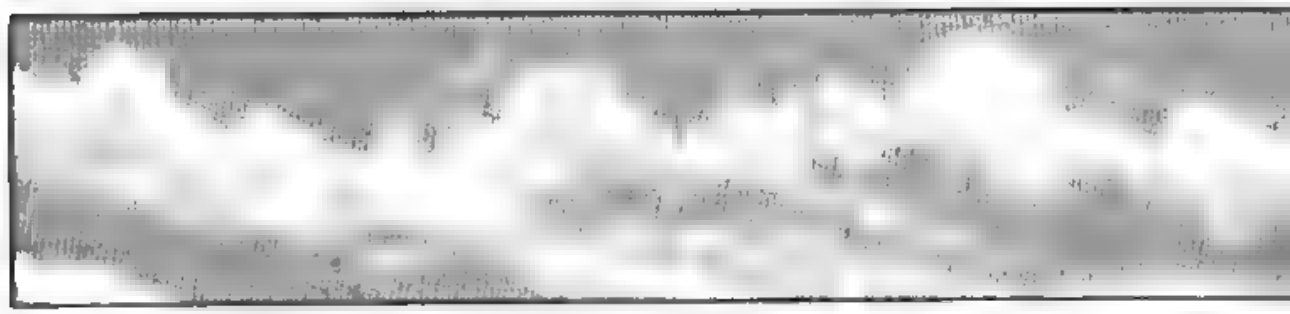
YEAH!
AT LAST!
WE MADE IT!

HABU!
INOUE!

I DEFEATED THE DEMON SLAB!


ONE COULD SAY IT WAS FROM THAT MOMENT THAT THE LEGEND HABU BECAME FIRST BORN
HABU HAD CLEARED THE FINAL "BIG NAME" DIFFICULT CLIMB LEFT IN JAPANESE ROCK WALLS. HABU CHANGED THE VERY CONCEPTS OF ROCK CLIMBING IN WINTER.
AFTERWARDS, IT GOT SO HABU WENT AFTER NOTHING BUT OTHER DIFFICULT JAPANESE ROCK CLIMBS ONE AFTER THE OTHER AND CONQUERED THEM IN SHORTER TIMES THAN ANYONE ELSE HAD


THE SOCIETY'S TEAM WAS UNHURT, BUT TWO SHERPAS HAD BEEN STRUCK BY AN AVALANCHE, FALLEN INTO A CREVICE, AND DIED.
JUNE 20... THE SEFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY HIMALYAN EXPEDITION RETURNED TO JAPAN. THEIR ANNAPURNA SUMMIT ATTEMPT HAD FAILED



YUR
SO YOU REALLY DID THE DRAGON SLAB, HUH?
HARU...
IT'S AMAZING YOU CAME BACK ALIVE.

IT WAS IN THIS STATE THAT THEY LEARNED ABOUT HARU AND SHOUE'S SUCCESS WITH THE FIRST WINTER CLIMB OF THE TAKIZAWA NUMBER 3 SLAB.

YOU DID IT BY SHEER DETERMINATION, DIDN'T YOU?

ANYWAY, LUCK WAS ON YOUR SIDE.

YEAH, I AIMED FOR A DAY WITH A GOOD WEATHER.

WELL... WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE SAFE.

CONGRATULATIONS, HABU.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MISTER ITOU

THE OVERHANG THERE...

THE MOST SEVERE SPOT OF ALL WAS THE F4 ICE CASCADE.

...

BUT, WELL, I'D CALCULATED FOR THAT FROM THE OUTSET.

THE FALLING SNOW WAS A STRUGGLE...

NOT SURPRISINGLY, IT WAS A CONTEST OF SPEED.

LOOKING BACK ON IT, IT'S LIKE I DID THE CLIMB ALL BY MYSELF

AHAHA! I GUESS SO!

IF I HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO TRAVERSE THAT

WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED.

HUH! YOU DID A GOOD JOB FIXING THAT ROUTE!

...

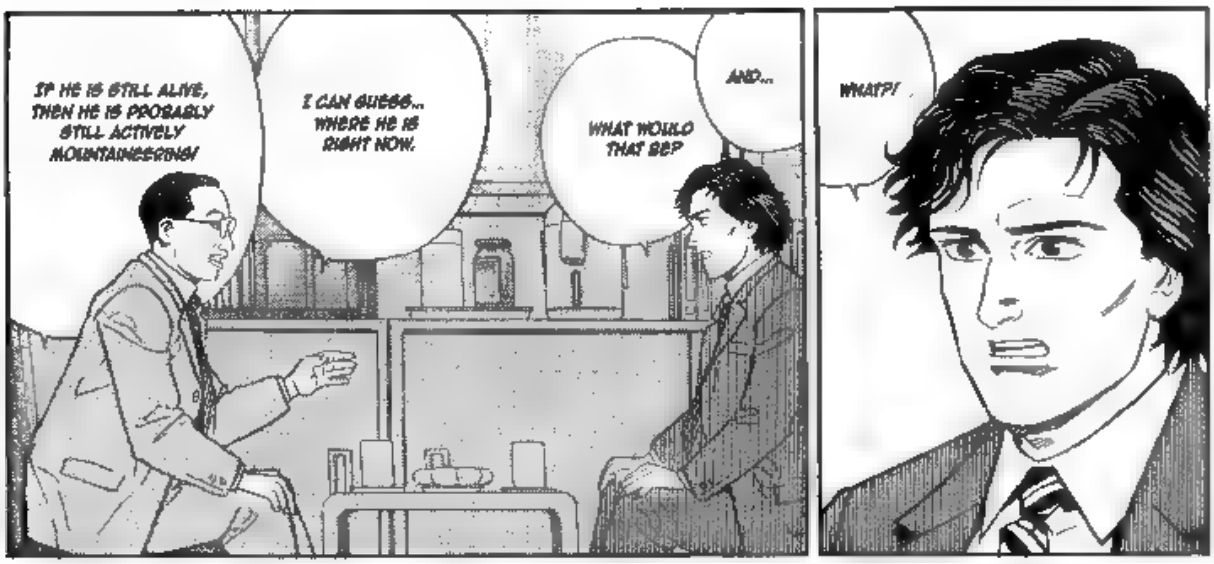
I COULD HAVE CLIMBED IT WITHOUT INOUE THERE!
WHAT ABOUT WHAT INOUE DID, HUH?
HANG ON A SECOND THERE, HABU.
WHOA, WHOA.
I CLIMBED THE DEMONS SLAB.

...?

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU SAYING!
HABU...?
IN THE END, MY ROPE PARTNER COULD HAVE BEEN ANYONE!

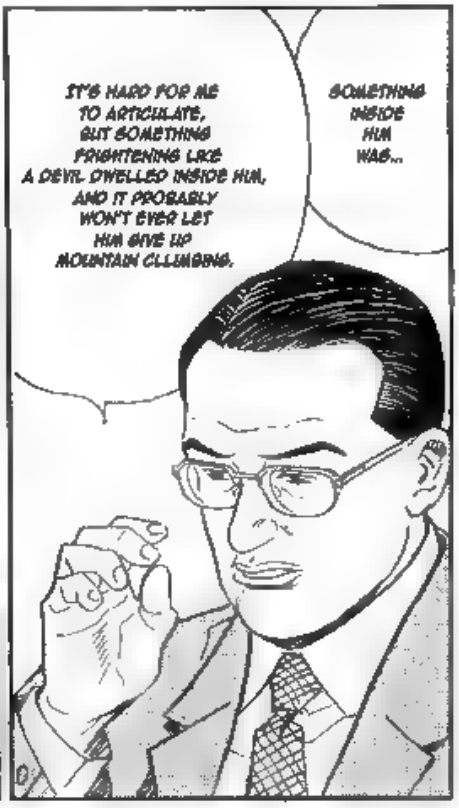
HE HAD ABSOLUTELY NO CONCEPT
OF WHAT HE WAS SAYING OR HOW IT WOULD HURT PEOPLE

THOSE DAYS UP THERE... I HAD RISKED MY LIFE.
BUT YOU SEE, I SIMPLY COULDN'T ABIDE THE THINGS HE'D SAID
THOSE WERE THINGS... HE SHOULDN'T HAVE SAID WITH ME SITTING THERE RIGHT NEXT TO HIM.
AND PROBABLY JUST HONESTLY UTTERED THE WORDS THAT WERE IN HIS HEAD.
WELL, HE WAS JUST SO OVERJOYED.
MUST BE COMING UP FIFTY NOW.
HAGU TOO...
I'M FORTY-EIGHT YEARS OLD NOW, I'VE BEEN OUT OF MOUNTAIN CLIMBING FOR TEN YEARS.
...
AND SO...
I LOST ANY INTEREST IN EVER BEING HIS ROPE PARTNER AGAIN
BUT...
THERE IS JUST ONE THING I DO KNOW ABOUT HIM.


IF HE IS STILL ALIVE, THEN HE IS PROBABLY STILL ACTIVELY MOUNTAINEERING!
I CAN GUESS... WHERE HE IS RIGHT NOW.
AND...
WHAT WOULD THAT BE?
WHAT?!

...
THAT'S THE ONE THING I CAN SAY WITH CERTAINTY! THAT'S IF HE'S STILL ALIVE
WHAT I MEAN IS, HE'S SURE TO STILL BE CLIMBING MOUNTAINS

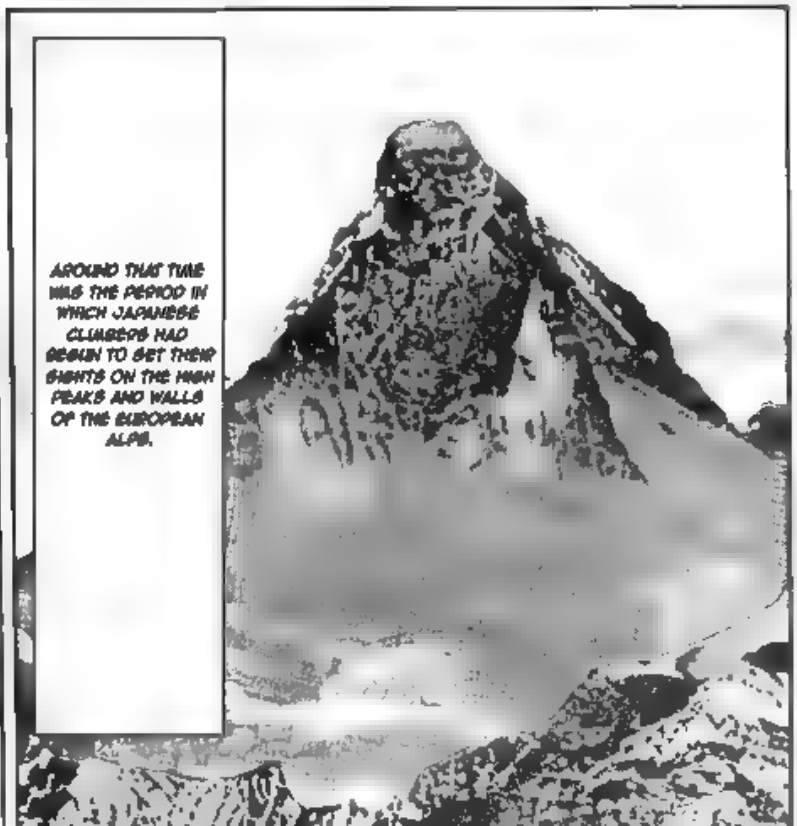
HE CAN'T LIVE ANY OTHER WAY.

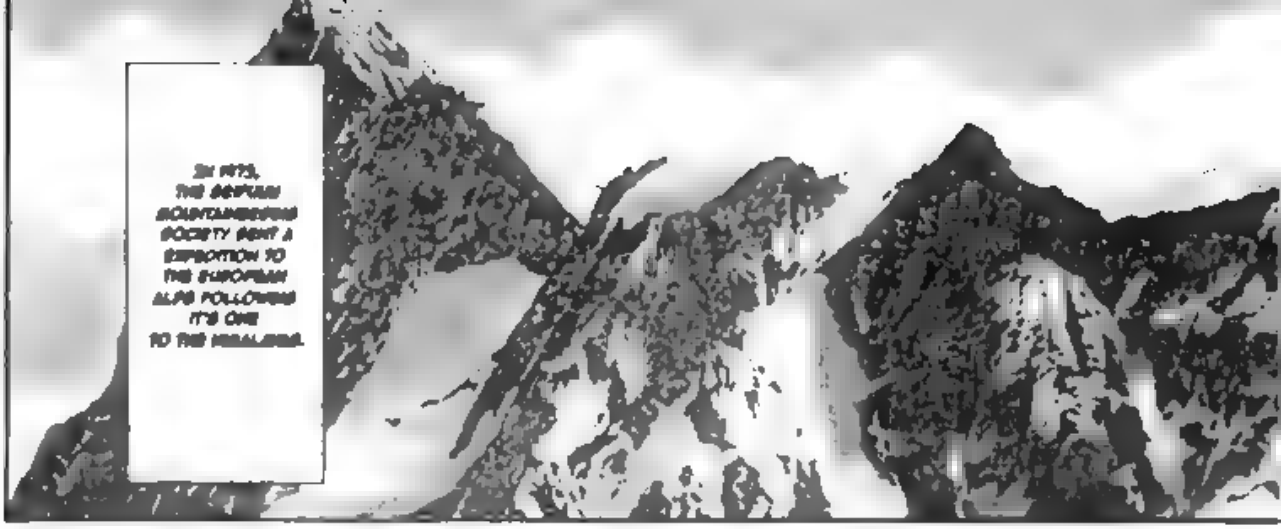

IT'S HARD FOR ME TO ARTICULATE, BUT SOMETHING FRIGHTENING LIKE A DEVIL DWELLED INSIDE HIM, AND IT PROBABLY WON'T EVER LET HIM GIVE UP MOUNTAIN CLIMBING.
SOMETHING INSIDE HIM WAS...

FOUR YEARS LATER... EXCEPT FOR HABU AND INOUE, STILL NO ONE ELSE HAD CLIMBED THE DEMONS SLAB IN WINTER AND CLEARED THE FROZEN WALL.

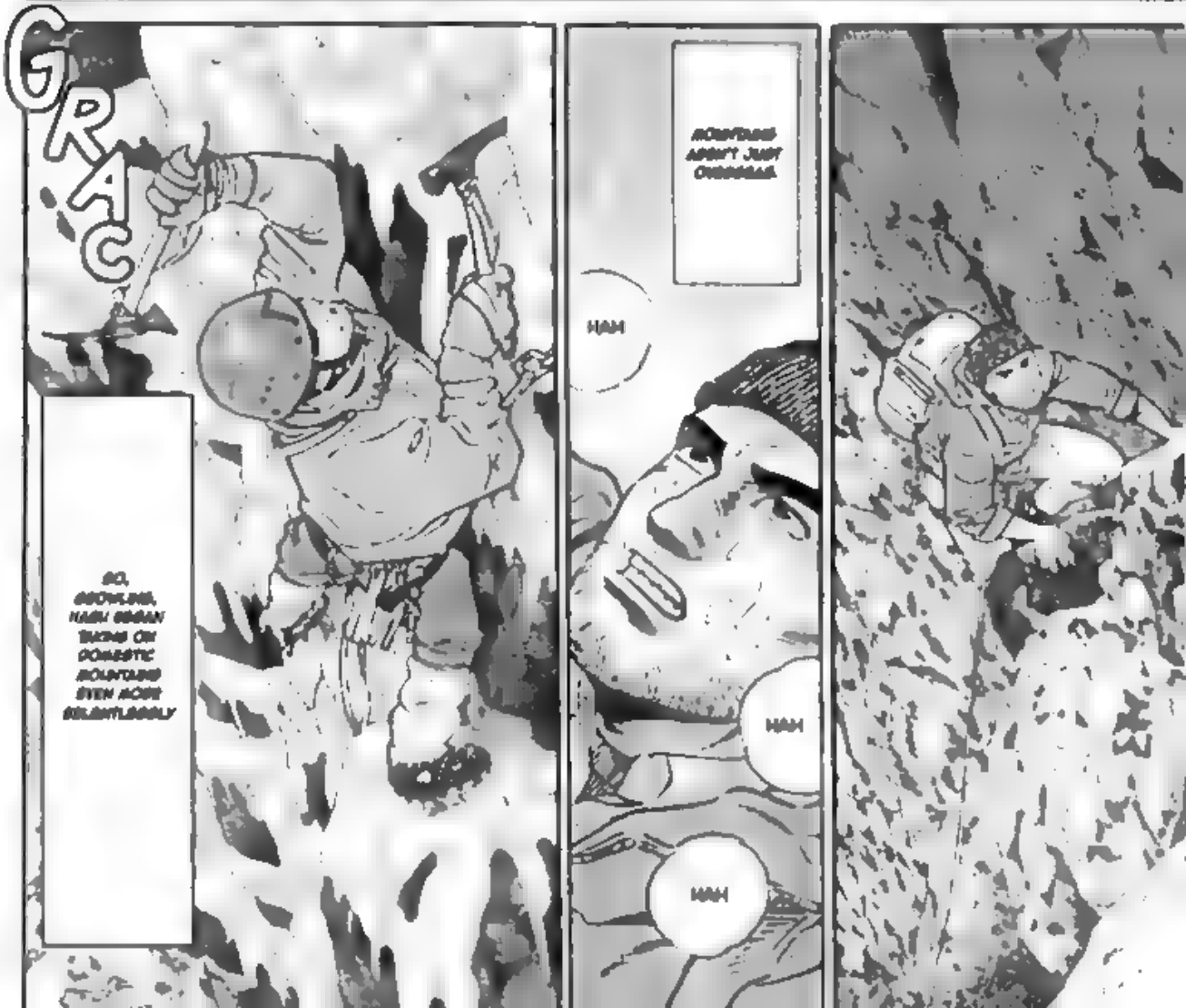
ZAAAAP
THREE PEOPLE HAD DIED ON IT.
SEVERAL PARTIES HAD TAKEN UP THE CHALLENGE, BUT ALL OF THEM WERE INVARIABLE FORCED TO ADMIT DEFEAT.

BUT, IN SPITE OF MAKING A NAME FOR HIMSELF, NO SPONSORS APPEARED FOR HABU AS AN INDIVIDUAL.


AROUND THAT TIME WAS THE PERIOD IN WHICH JAPANESE CLIMBERS HAD BEGUN TO SET THEIR SIGHTS ON THE HIGH PEAKS AND WALLS OF THE EUROPEAN ALPS.


IN 1973,
THE BRITISH
MOUNTAINEERING
SOCIETY SENT A
EXPEDITION TO
THE EUROPEAN
ALPS FOLLOWING
IT'S ONE
TO THE HIMALAYAS.

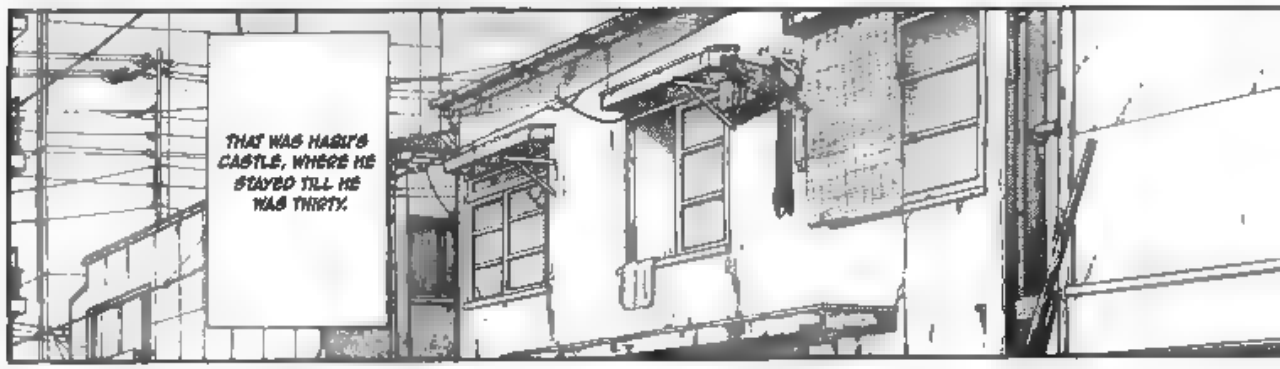
AND AS WE SHOWED,
HABU DIDN'T HAVE
THE MONEY,
AND WAS FORCED
TO GIVE UP ON
THIS EXPEDITION
AS WELL.


GRAC
SO,
SHOWING
HABU SHIGAI
TAKING ON
DOMESTIC
MOUNTAINS
EVEN MORE
RELIGIOUSLY
MOUNTAINS
AREN'T JUST
CHIMERAS.
HAH
HAH
HAH

IS SOMETHING UP?
COULD I PLEASE GET A WEEK OFF STARTING TOMMORROW?
I'M SORRY BUT...
AND AS USUAL, HE SKIPPED FROM JOB TO JOB. HABU WASNT CAPABLE OF STICKING WITH THE SAME JOB FOR MORE THAN THREE MONTHS
CLINGING?
HUH?
CLINGING.
HUH?/
COME AGAIN?
THEN I QUIT.
I SEE ...
NO! NO! SERIOUSLY, YOU HAVENT EVEN WORKED A FULL MONTH HERE YET!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
SOMETIMES HE'D HAVE A FIGHT AND QUIT. THERE WAS JUST NO PLACE FOR HABU IN SO-CALLED "STRAIGHT SOCIETY".
HE WOULD JUST QUIT JOBS FLAT.
WHAT?

EVEN THE APARTMENT HE LIVED IN WAS NO MORE THAN A RENTED ROOM WITH THE BARE ESSENTIALS

EACH TIME HE CHANGED JOBS, HIS LIFESTYLE WOULD GET ROUGHER, BUT IN HASU'S CASE IT WAS ROUGH TO BEGIN WITH.


THAT WAS HASU'S CASTLE, WHERE HE STAYED TILL HE WAS THIRTY.

YOU HAVE TO TAILOR YOUR JOB TO ACCOMMO-DATE YOUR CLIMBING!
THAT'S WHAT I'VE DONE ALL ALONG.

LOOK, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.
I CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE TIME OFF FROM WORK THIS MONTH.
WELL, THEN QUIT THAT DAMN JOB.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU CAN'T GET THE OFF FROM WORK?

JOUJI HABU WAS THIRTY YEARS OLD.

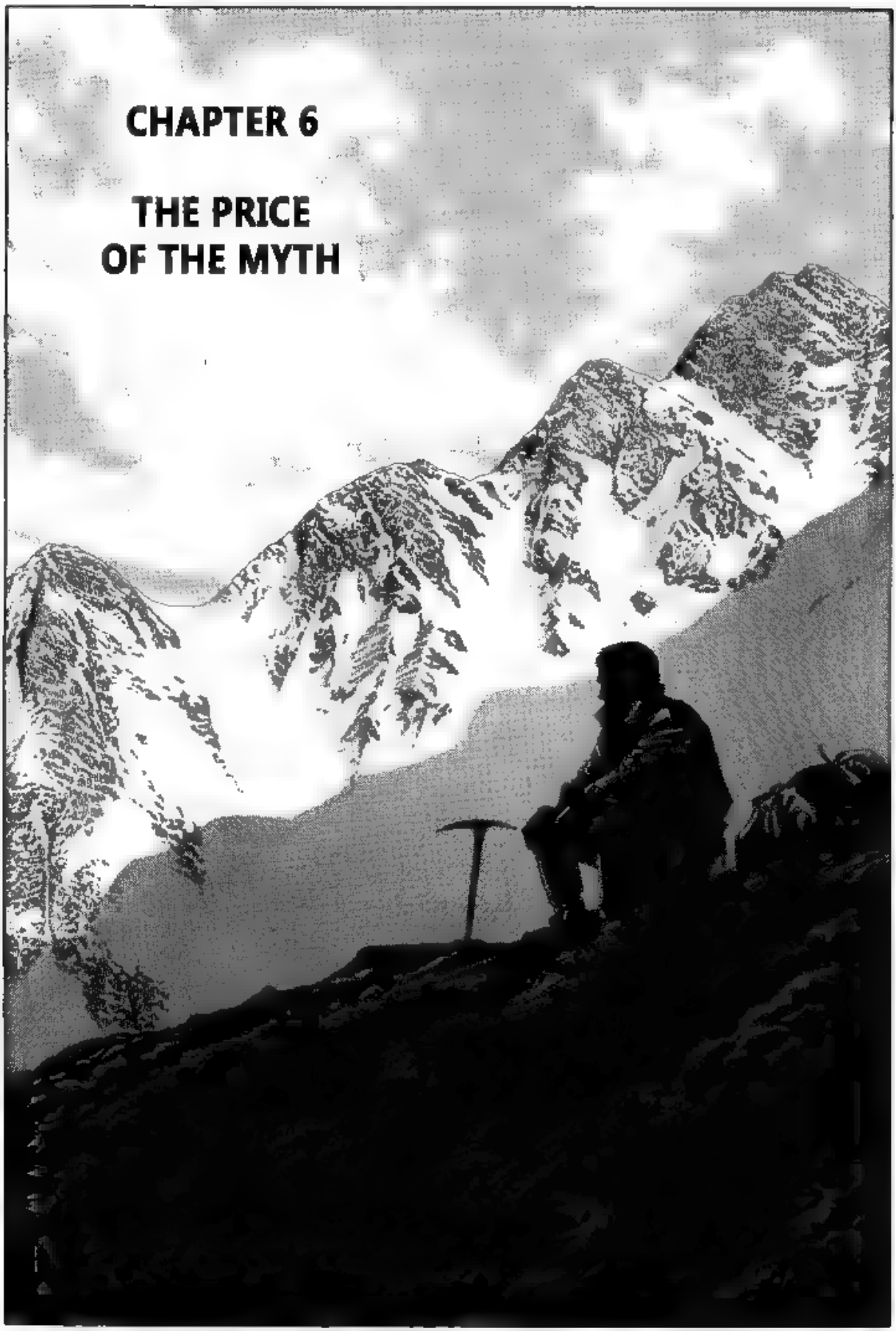
MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE, HABU YEARNED FOR THE OVERSEAS MOUNTAINS - THE ROCK WALLS OF THE EUROPEAN ALPS, THE PEAKS OF THE HIMALAYA - BUT NO OPPORTUNITY EVER CAME.

AND SO BEFORE LONG HABU'S ROPE PARTNERS ENDED UP LEAVING HIM ON HIS OWN ONE BY ONE

AT TIMES, HABU WOULD FIERCELY DEMAND THAT HIS COMPANIONS DO THINGS THE SAME WAY HE DID

CHAPTER 6

THE PRICE OF THE MYTH



BECAUSE MISTER HABU IS A MEMBER.

I RESPECT HIM VERY HIGHLY.

THE MISTER HABU WHO SCALED THE DEMON SLAB IN WINTER.

YES!

HABU?

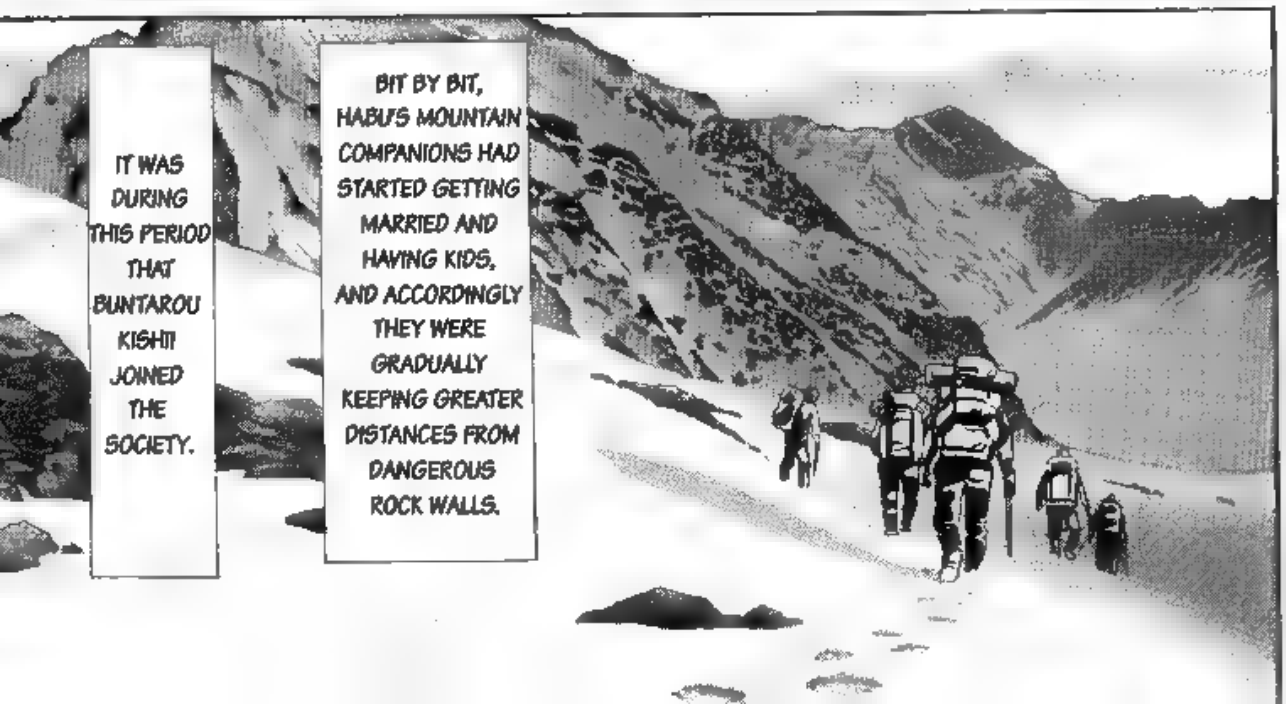
APRIL, 1974, BUNTAROU KISHI, EIGHTEEN YEARS OLD AT THE TIME, BECAME A MEMBER OF THE SEIFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY

SO, PLEASE, IF I MAY.

I THINK HE IS A INCREDIBLE PERSON.

HEY!
MY NAME IS BUNTAROU KISHI.
I'M PLEASED TO MEET YOU ALL!
WELL... GOOD TO HAVE YOU ON BOARD.
KISHI WAS ANOTHER PERSON WHO HAD BECOME BEWITCHED BY "THE TALE OF THE DEMON SLAB" – HABU'S 1970 ACHIEVEMENT

WOULD YOU PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT THE DEMON SLAB SOME TIME?
WOULD YOU...
HM?
MISTER HABU?
E-EXCUSE ME.


IT WAS DURING THIS PERIOD THAT BUNTAROU KISHI JOINED THE SOCIETY.
BIT BY BIT, HABU'S MOUNTAIN COMPANIONS HAD STARTED GETTING MARRIED AND HAVING KIDS, AND ACCORDINGLY THEY WERE GRADUALLY KEEPING GREATER DISTANCES FROM DANGEROUS ROCK WALLS.

I'VE MADE SOME TEA!
MISTER HABU!

MISTER HABU!

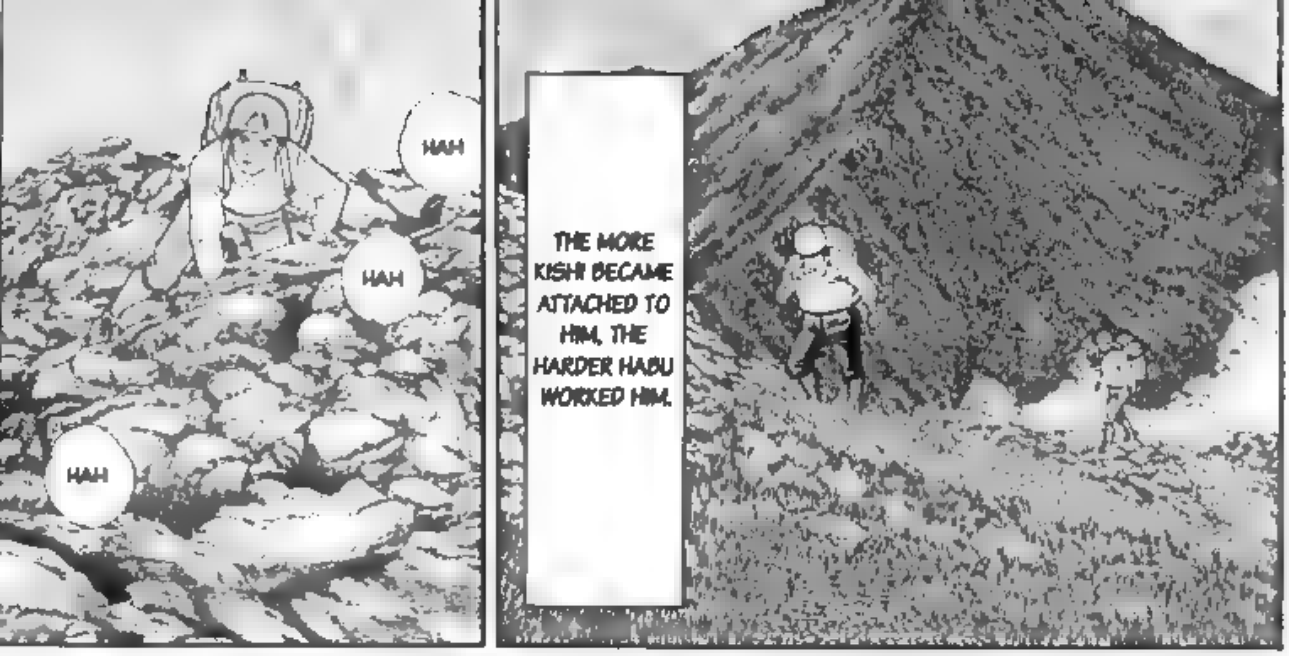
WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO NEXT?
ONCE YOU'VE DONE THIS MOUNTAIN?

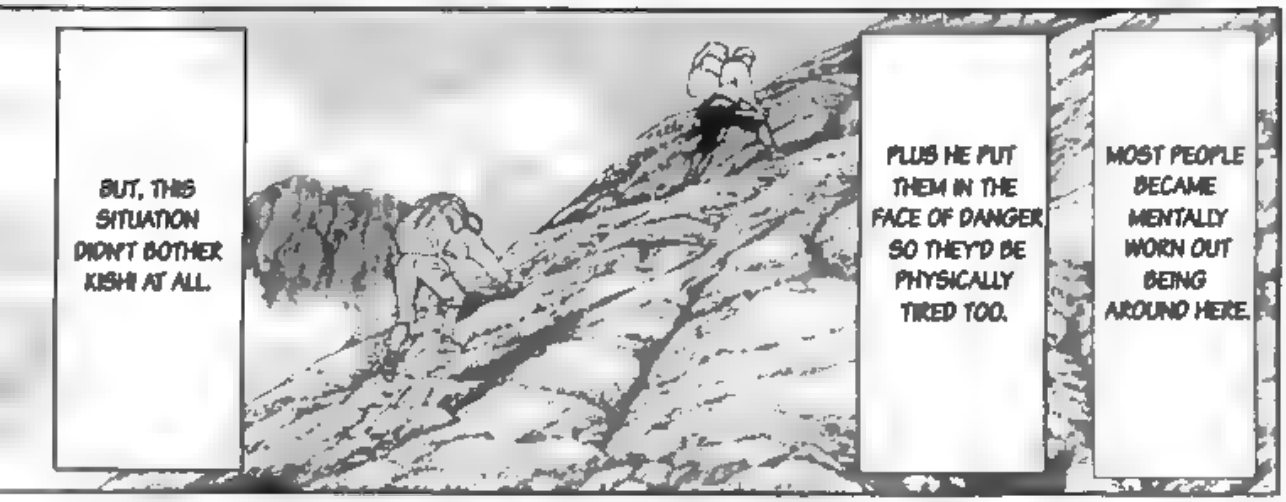
SOMEONE TAKING A LIKING TO HIM... WAS SOMETHING HABU WASN'T USED TOO.

SLURP

PLEASE TAKE ME ALONG WITH YOU.
WELL, THEN
HMM, WELL... MAYBE YARI IN THE NORTH ALPS.

PRETTY FLUMMOXED BY HIM TOO.
HABU SEEMS...
HOW LONG'S HE GONNA KEEP THIS UP?
THAT KISHI KID...

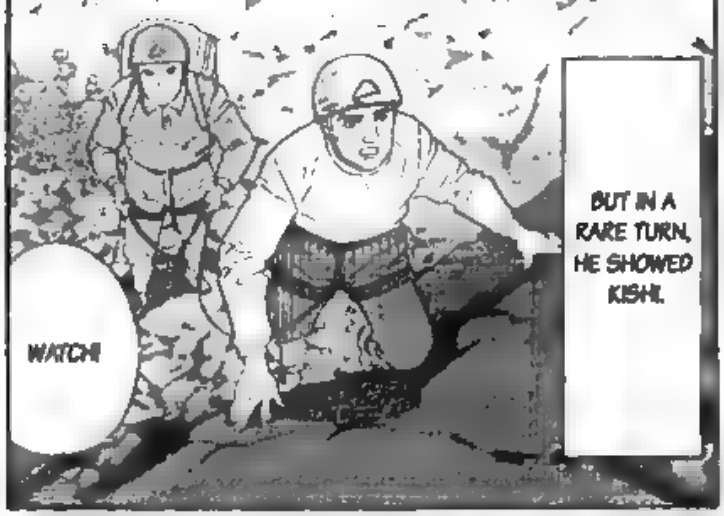

HAH
HAH
HAH
THE MORE KISHI BECAME ATTACHED TO HIM, THE HARDER HABU WORKED HIM.


BUT, THIS SITUATION DIDN'T BOTHER KISHI AT ALL.
PLUS HE PUT THEM IN THE FACE OF DANGER SO THEY'D BE PHYSICALLY TIRED TOO.
MOST PEOPLE BECAME MENTALLY WORN OUT BEING AROUND HERE.

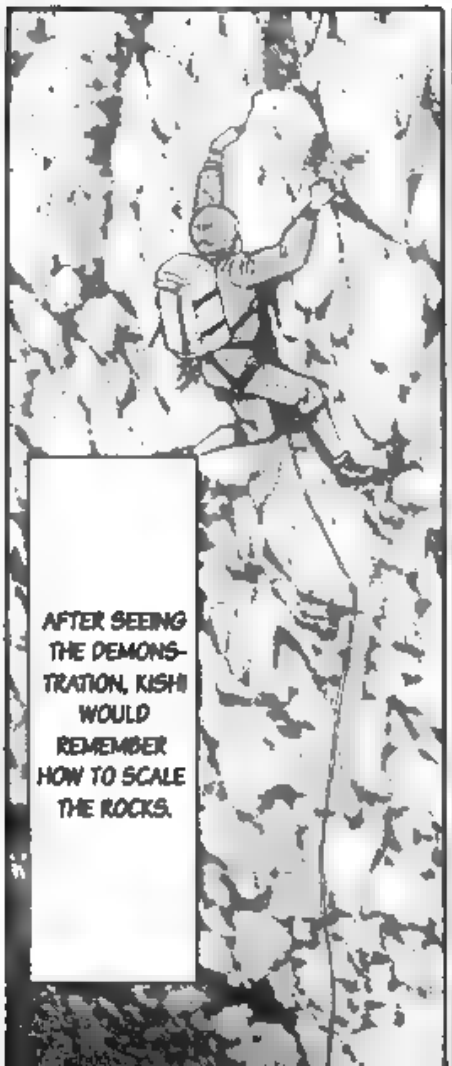
THAT'S A MEAN JOKE, MISTER HABU!
NO WAY!

MISTER HABU, YOU REALLY ARE TOUGH!
HAH
MY FEET ARE ALREADY ALL WOBBLY!
HAH
IF YOU'RE UNCOM-FORTABLE, FEEL FREE TO QUIT.

PUUFFF

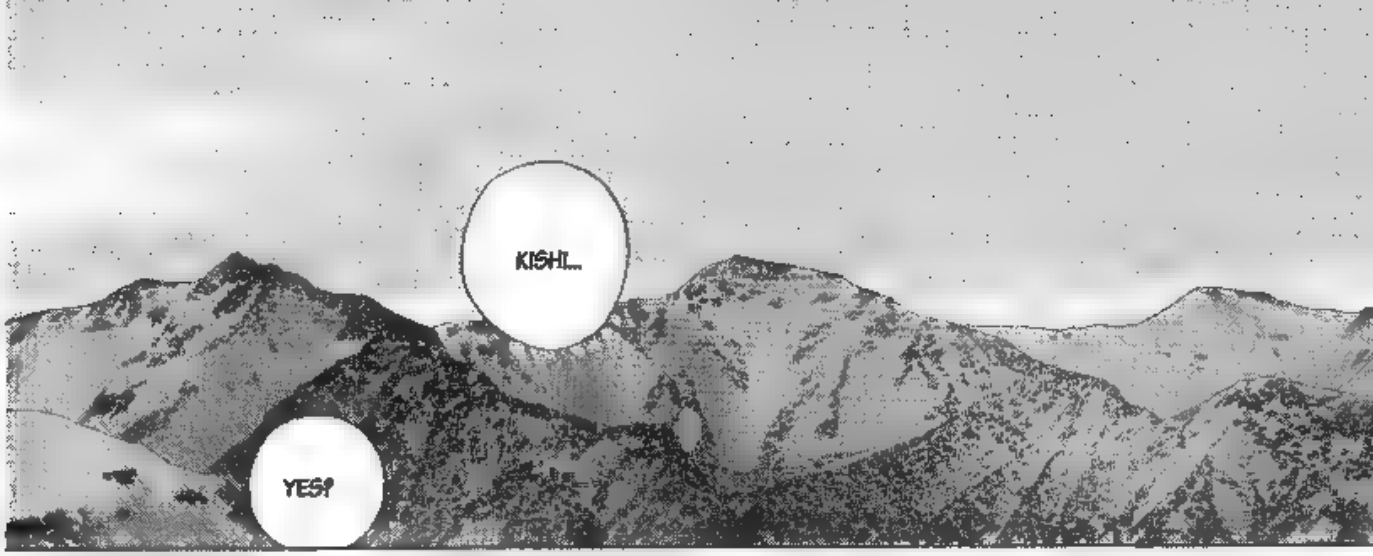

WATCH!
BUT IN A RARE TURN, HE SHOWED KISHI.

HABU WASNT THE TYPE TO TEACH OTHERS TO CLIMB.

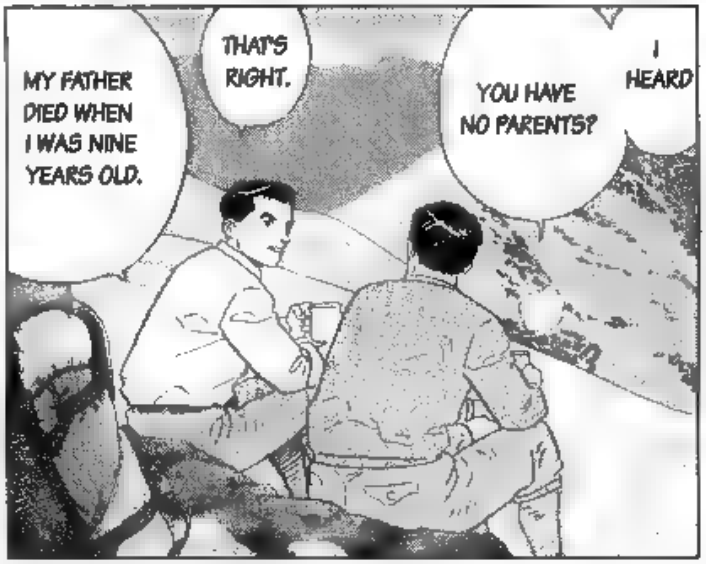

AFTER SEEING THE DEMONS-TRATION, KISHI WOULD REMEMBER HOW TO SCALE THE ROCKS.

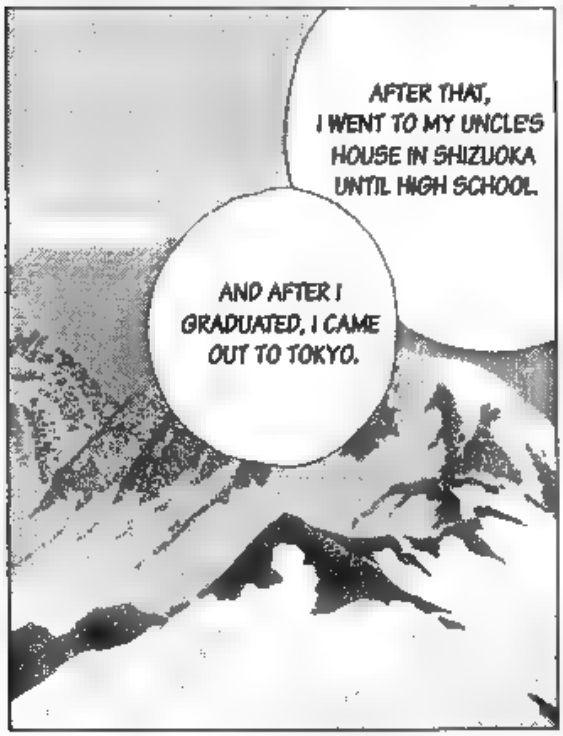
BUT BY "TEACHING", ALL HE ACTUALY DID WAS CLIMB HIS OWN WAY WHILE KISHI WATCHED.

ON SOME ROCK FACES THE DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY OF THE CLIMB CAN VARY TREMENDOUSLY DEPENDING ON FOOT PLACEMENT.
NO!
START WITH YOUR LEFT FOOT THERE!
AND HABU DIDN'T FIND KISHI'S TAGGING ALONG PARTICULARLY BOTHERSOME. IN FACT, ONE COULD EVEN SAY THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO WAS COMING ALONG FINE.
HAH
HAH
HAH
KISHI WAS OFTEN ACCOM-PANYING HABU.


KISHI...
YES?

THEY TOLD ME HE'D GONE TO THE NORTHERN ALPS IN WINTER AND BEEN BURIED BY AN AVALANCHE.
HE DIED MOUNTAIN CLIMBING.


MY FATHER DIED WHEN I WAS NINE YEARS OLD.
THAT'S RIGHT.
YOU HAVE NO PARENTS?
I HEARD

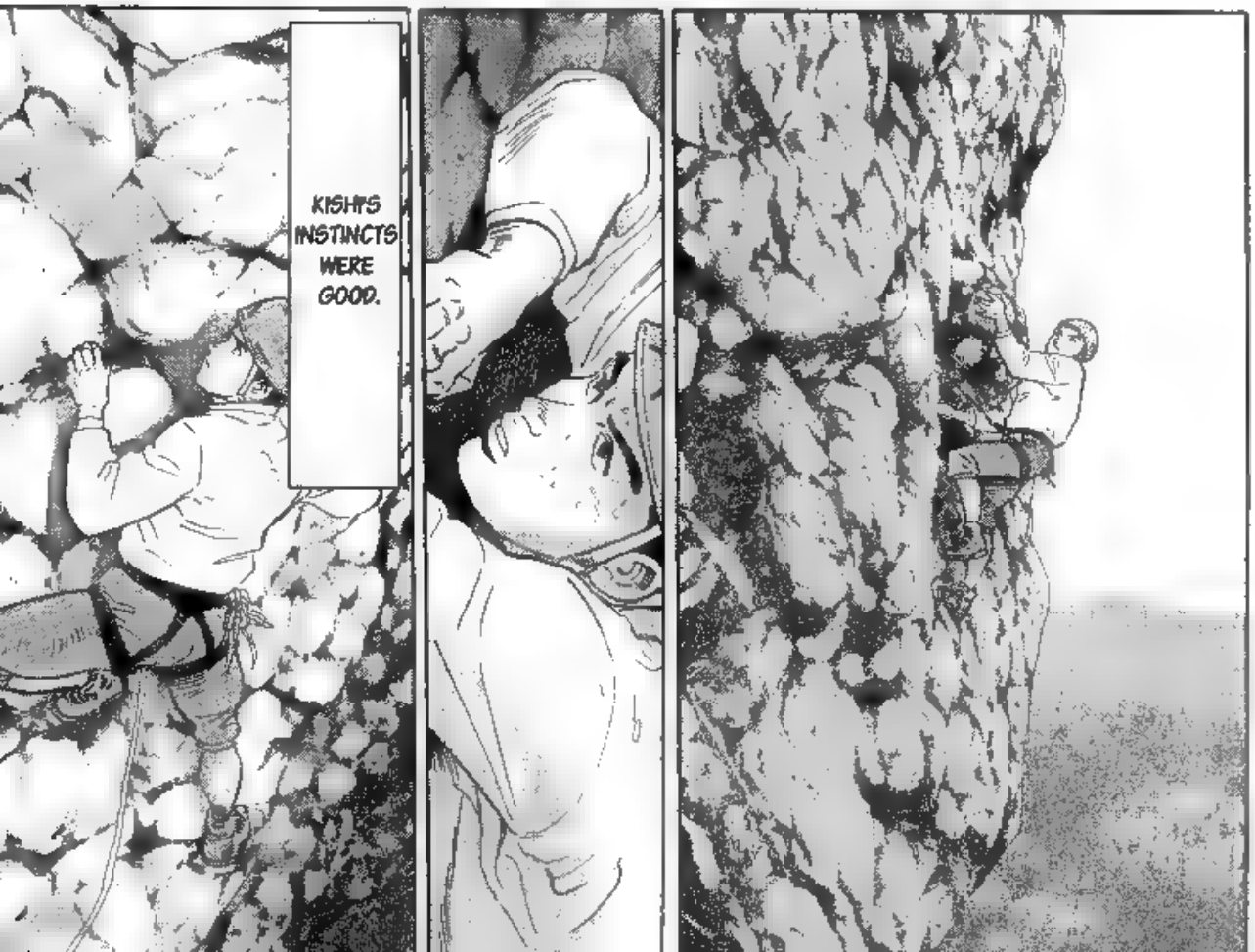

AFTER THAT, I WENT TO MY UNCLE'S HOUSE IN SHIZUOKA UNTIL HIGH SCHOOL.
AND AFTER I GRADUATED, I CAME OUT TO TOKYO.

MY MOTHER DIED OF CANCER WHEN I WAS TWELVE.

I REALLY APPRECIATE WHAT MY UNCLE DID.
...
HE TRULY RAISED ME LIKE I WAS ONE OF HIS OWN CHILDREN.

I'VE GOT A SISTER THREE YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME.
SHE'S GOING TO HIGH SCHOOL NOW.

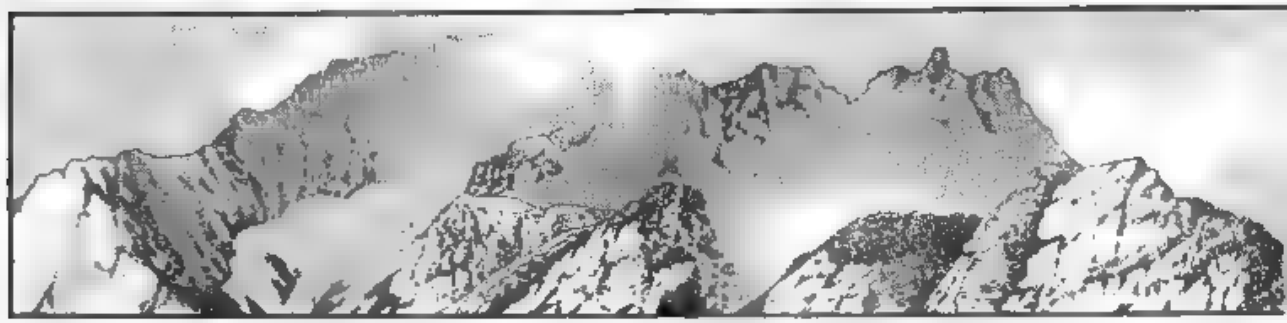
PERHAPS HABU FELT SOME EMOTIONAL CONNECTION TO KISHI, WHOSE CIRCUMSTANCES RESEMBLED HIS OWN.


KISHI'S INSTINCTS WERE GOOD.

HE'S FAST!
WOW ...

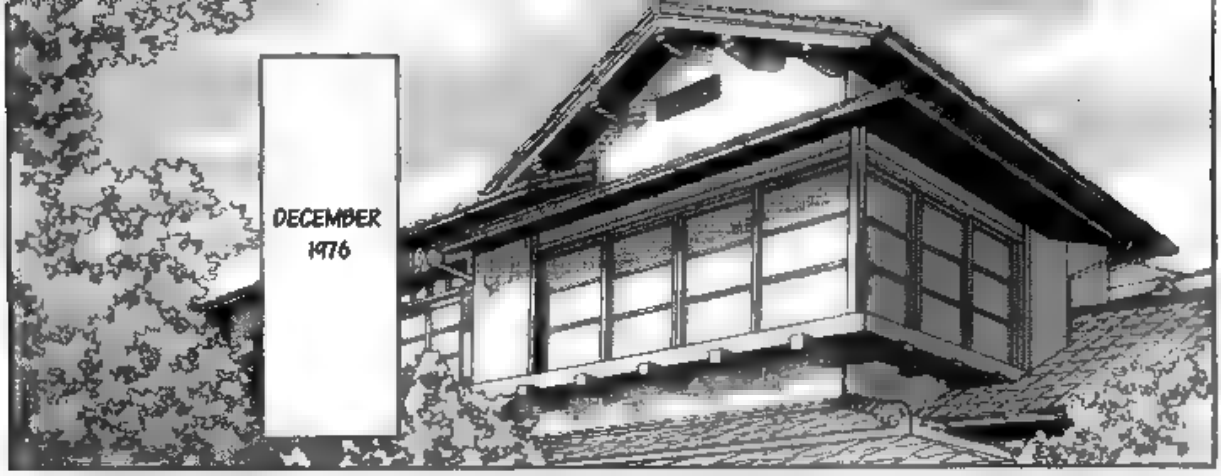
WHEN IT CAME TO THE ROCKS, A PHYSICAL AFFINITY FOR CLIMBING IN HIS NATURE.

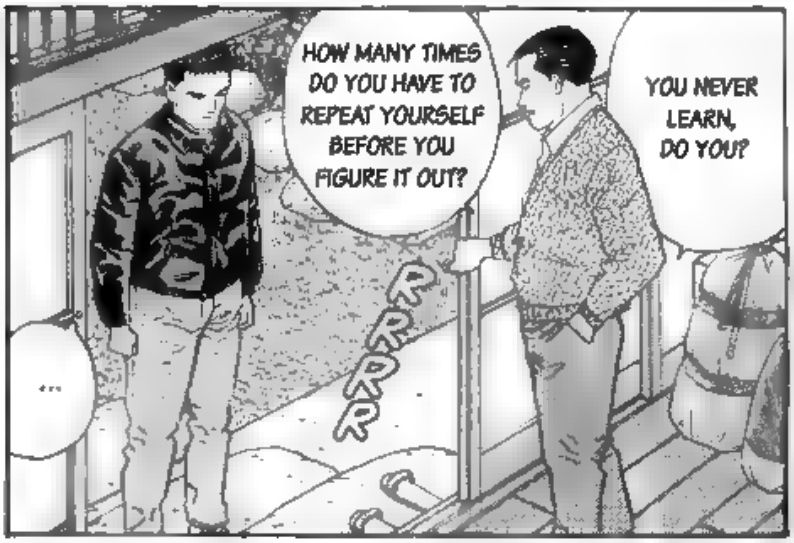
WATCHED FROM A DISTANCE LIKE THIS, THEY'RE ACTUALLY EXACTLY ALIKE, HUH!
YEAH!
HABU'S STYLE OF CLIMBING.
SOMEHOW, IT KINDA REMINDS ME OF...



KISHI HAD DEVELOPED TO A POINT WHERE HABU PUT HIM TO WORK AS A SECOND WHEN ON AN EASY CLIMB.

AFTER ABOUT TWO YEARS.


DECEMBER 1976

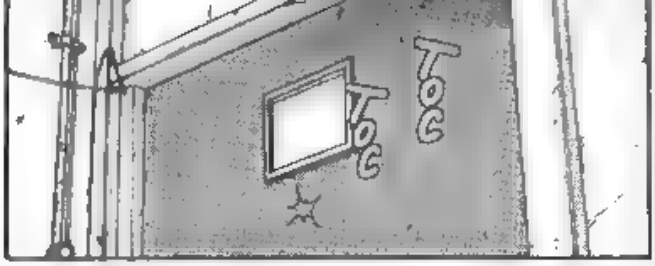

HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU HAVE TO REPEAT YOURSELF BEFORE YOU FIGURE IT OUT?
YOU NEVER LEARN, DO YOU?
...
PRRRR

DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN!
WHAT NOW?
PRRR

LISTEN.
IF YOU CHASE ABE AWAY, THERE'LL BE NO ONE LEFT WHO WILL GO CLIMBING WIH YOU.
DO YOU GET THAT?
YES.

IF YOU ATTACK A PERSON SO BRAZENLY LIKE THAT, ANYONE WOULD GET ANGRY.
ABE'S GOT HIS OWN CIRCUM-STANCES TO DEAL WITH.

AND HE QUIT ALL OF A SUDDEN.
BUT... HE'D PROMISED.


TOC
TOC

HABU HAD LOST ANOTHER VALUABLE ROPE PARTNER IN THE SEIFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY.

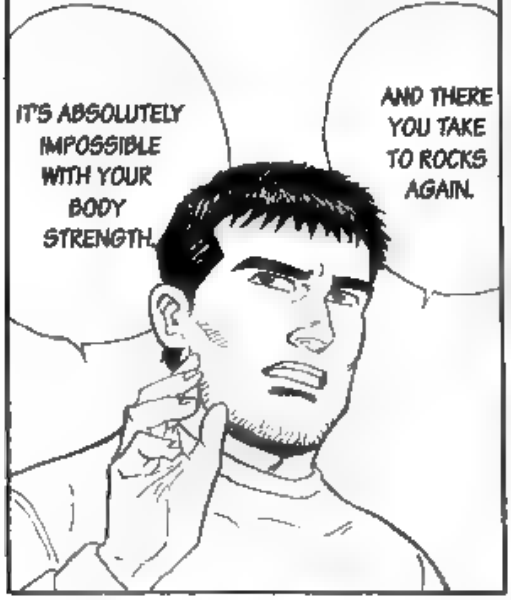
HM?
WHO IS IT?
IT'S KISHI.

WHAT ARE YOU HERE FOR?

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! THERE'S NO WAY!
IT'S THE SHEER CLIFF OF THE NORTHERN ALPS!
MISTER HABU, PLEASE.

...
I HEARD FROM MISTER ITOU.
ABOUT THE THING WITH ABE.

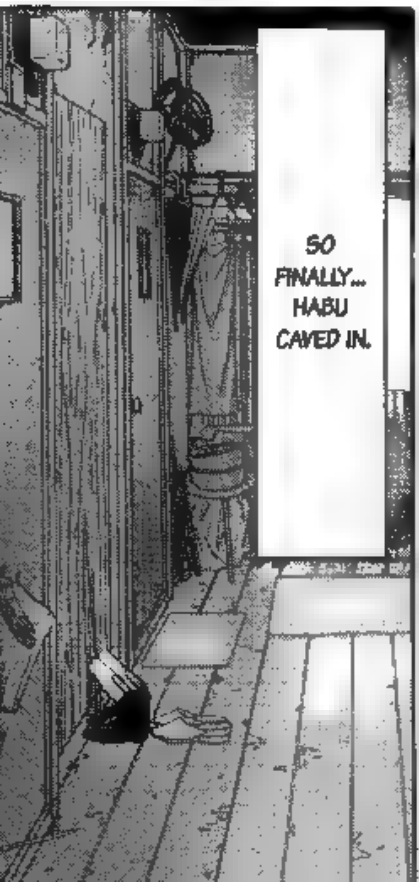
PLEASE, I'M BEGGING YOU. TAKE ME INSTEAD!


IT'S ABSOLUTELY IMPOSSIBLE WITH YOUR BODY STRENGTH.
AND THERE YOU TAKE TO ROCKS AGAIN.

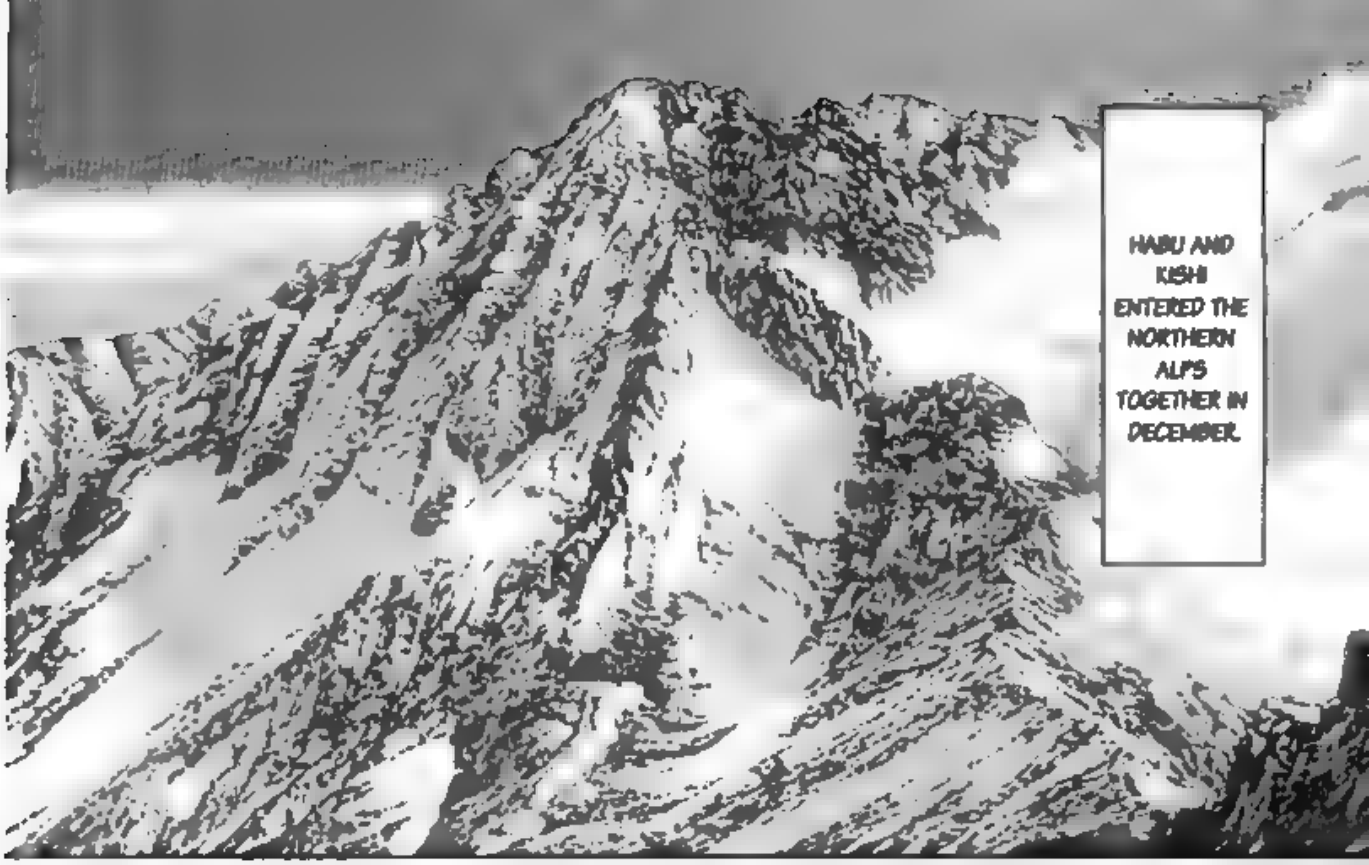
YOU HAVE TO SET UP A BIVOUAC ALONG THE WAY ON THE FROZEN ROCKS.
PLUS, ONCE YOU'VE DONE THE CLIFF, YOU HAVE TO KEEP GOING ON TO TAKIDANI IN KITAHO.

I ASK YOU. PLEASE, I SWEAR I WON'T CAUSE TROUBLE.
SUMMER OR FALL WOULD BE FINE, BUT WER'RE TALKING ABOUT TAKIDANI IN WINTER.
NO.

I CAN DO IT - PLEASE TAKE ME WITH YOU!
I'LL BE FINE!


SO FINALLY... HABU CAVED IN.

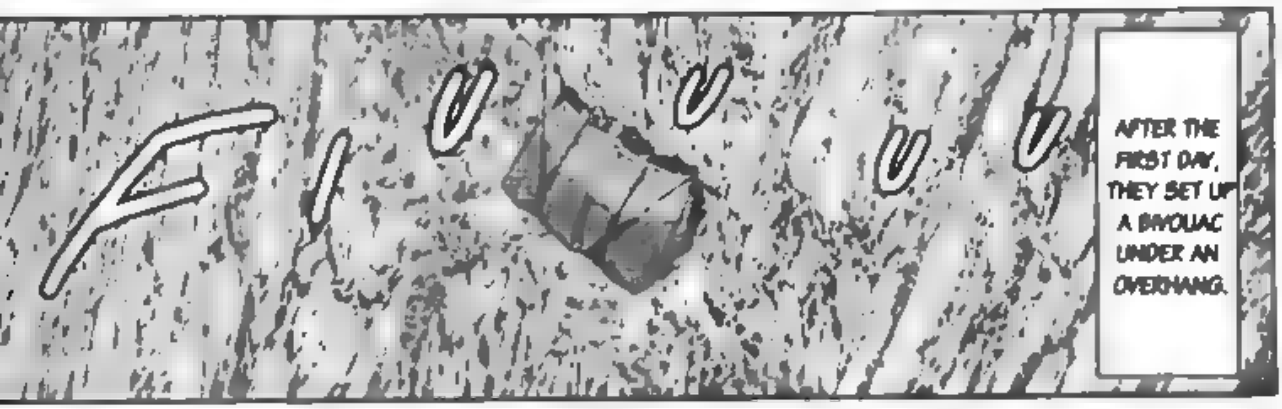
IF YOU END UP IN DANGER I DON'T CARE IF YOU CUT THE ROPE!
IF I BECOME A BURDEN, YOU CAN JUST GO AHEAD WITHOUT ME ANYTIME.


HABU AND KISHI ENTERED THE NORTHERN ALPS TOGETHER IN DECEMBER.

IN THE FIRST DAY, THEY GOT TO THE START OF THE ASCENT.

AND THEY CLIMBED A 200 METER SLAB.

THEN THEY CROSSED A MILDLY SLOPED 100-METER BELT.
AFTER THE SLAB, LEFT ALONG A BAND.


AFTER THE FIRST DAY, THEY SET UP A BIVOUAC UNDER AN OVERHANG.

WELL...
IT'S STILL THE FIRST DAY.
I'M KEEPING UP AS MUCH AS I CAN TO AVOID DRAGGIN YOU DOWN, MISTER HABU
GLUP
OH, NO!
YOU'RE DOING MUCH BETTER THAN I EXPECTED!
I'VE HAD TO REASSESS YOU SOME, KISHI!
I'M AT MY LIMIT HERE!

IT'S... BEEN MY DREAM TO CLIMB AS YOUR ROPE PARTNER LIKE THIS.

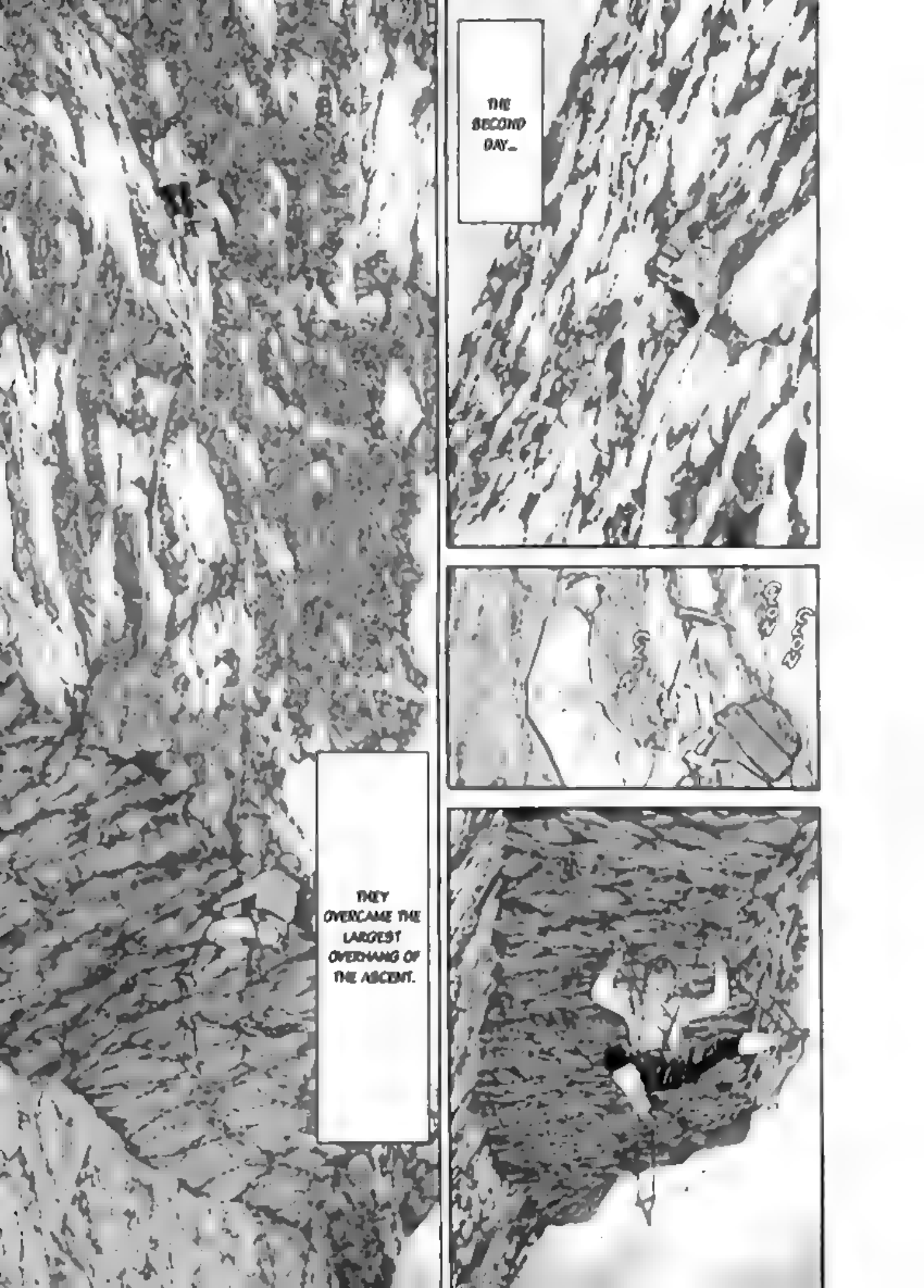
I'M DETERMINED TO TRY TO KEEP UP WITH YOU, MISTER HABU, NO MATTER WHAT.
I HOPE YOU'LL STAY STRONG.

IT'S PRECISELY PEOPLE LIKE YOU THAT THEY SHOULD BE SENDING ON CLIMBS OVERSEAS.
NO, IT'S THE TRUTH. THE JAPANESE CLIMBING WORLD DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING.
STOP IT! YOU'RE REALLY OVERRATING ME, AREN'T YOU?

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST...
I THINK YOU'RE JAPAN'S GREATEST CLIMBER.

IF YOU WANT TO KEEP CLIMBING YOU HAVE TO BE ALIVE.
I'VE GOT NO INTEREST IN DYING ON A MOUNTAIN!
IT'S THE ROCK OR THE HARD PLACE FOR US.

I COULD DIE HAPPY!
IF I COULD CLIMB THE EUROPEAN ALPS AND THE MOUNTAINS IN THE HIMALAYAS WITH YOU, MISTER HABU,
NOW YOU'RE JUST BEING RIDICULOUS!


THE SECOND DAY...
THEY OVERCAME THE LARGEST OVERHANG OF THE ASCENT.

GOOD.
THERE'S JUST A SMALL OVERHANG LEFT.
HOW'RE YOU DOING, KISHI?
WORN OUT?
NO, I'M FINE! I CAN KEEP GOING.
HAH
HAH
WE'LL PASS IT IN TRAVERSE THEN THERE'S...
ONLY 150 METERS LEFT.
YES, SIR!
ALL RIGHT? HANG IN THERE AND STICK WITH IT.

THAT IT HAPPENED.
WHEN HE WAS TRAVERSING LEFT ACROSS THE OVERHANG
CRAC
AAAHHHH!!!
RA RA RA RAS

RRRR
UAAHHH
BI-I-I-NG
BUM

PSSC
PSSCH
GRAC
RAS
RAS
AHH-HHH
RAAS RAAS RAAS
ARGHHH
KI...
KISHI...

KIII-
SHIIIII
ARE YOU
ALL RIGHT?!?

I'M
SORRY...
RRR
RRR
KIII-
SHIIIII

I'M HANGING IN MIDAIR BELOW THE OVERHANG.
...UNHH
ARE YOU OKAY, KISHI!
CAN YOU CLIMB YOUR WAY BACK UP?
I...
I CAN'T...
AAAR-GH!
RAS
RAS
RAS
I CA... I CAN'T...
REACH THE WALL.
GUFFF
RAS

THERE'S NO WAY I CAN PULL HIM UP FROM THIS POSITION!
BUUUU
I COULD HOIST HIM UP USING MY OWN BODY STRENGTH, BUT...

GNNNRZ

NO USE!

UFFFF
I CAN'T.

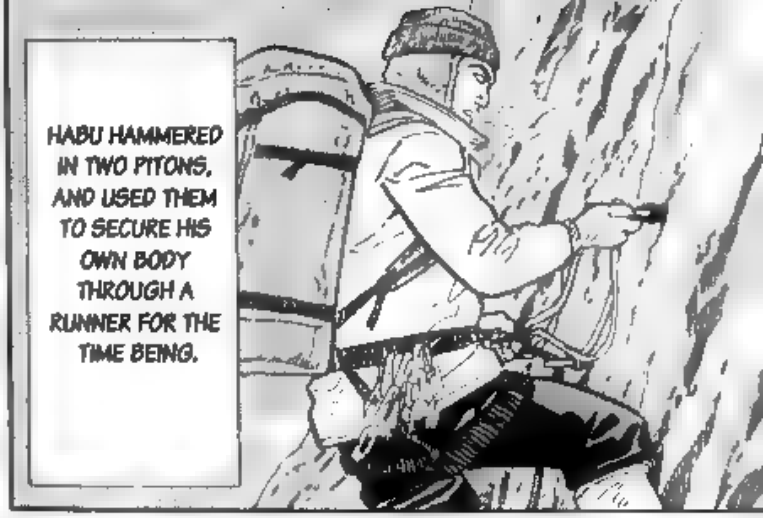
IF WE JUST STAY LIKE THIS,
I'LL WIND UP EXHAUSTED AND OUT OF STRENGTH!

THEN WE'D PROBABLY BOTH END UP DANGLING IN MIDAIR UNDER THE OVERHANG, WOULDN'T WE?
SHIT!
WHAT DO I DO?

CLON
CLON
CLON

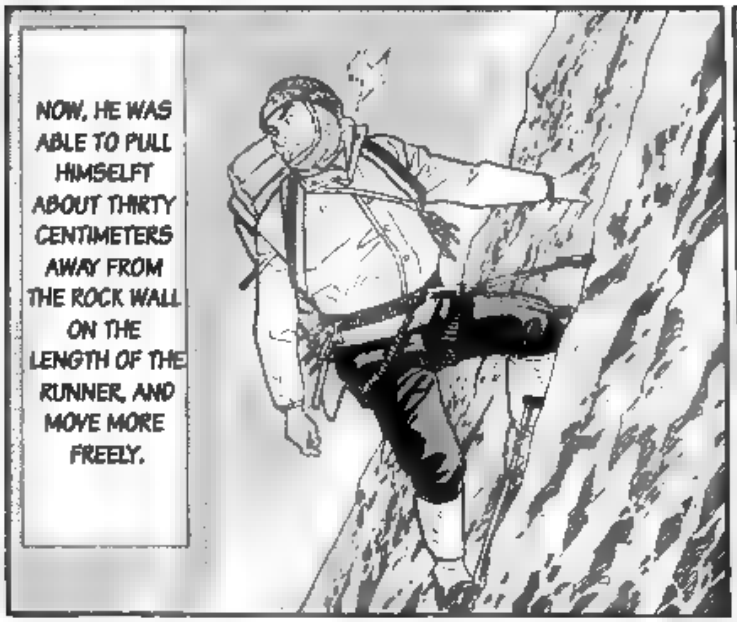
CLON
CLON
CLON

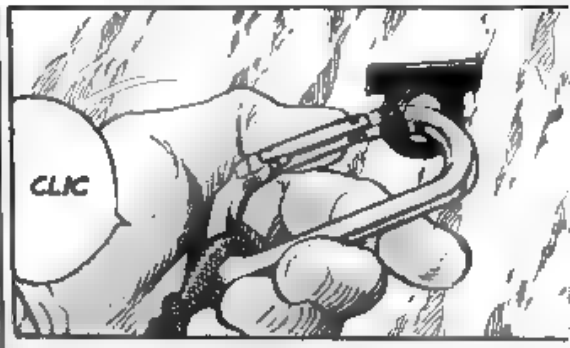
UGGH HHH
REMOVED THE ROPE BEARING KISHI'S BODY WEIGHT FROM HIS SAFETY BELT.
AND ATTACHED A KARABINER TO A THIRD PITON
RZ RZ RZ


HABU HAMMERED IN TWO PITONS, AND USED THEM TO SECURE HIS OWN BODY THROUGH A RUNNER FOR THE TIME BEING.

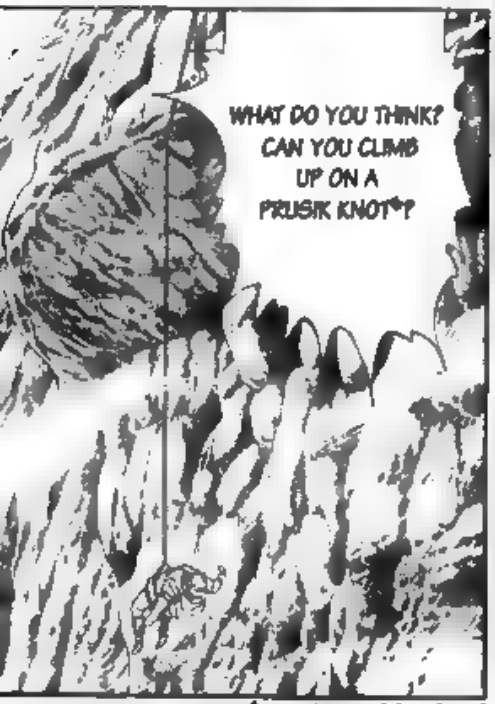
RAS

AND THEN...

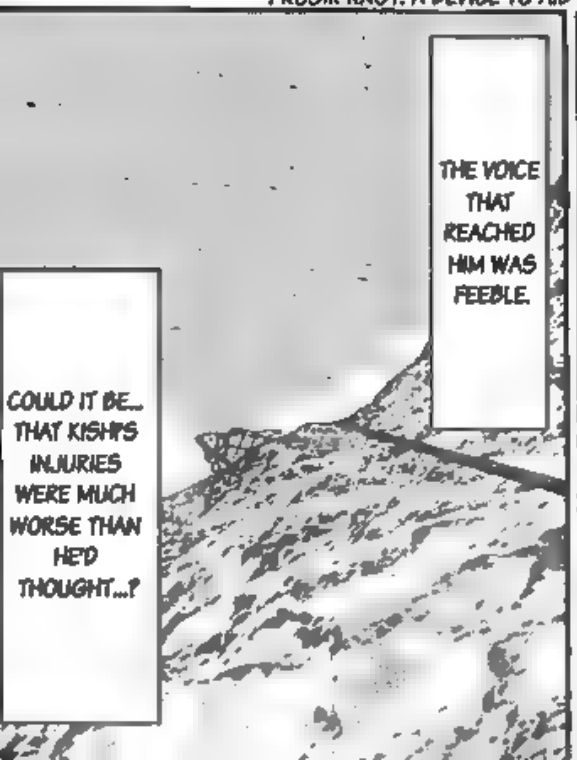

NOW, HE WAS ABLE TO PULL HIMSELFT ABOUT THIRTY CENTIMETERS AWAY FROM THE ROCK WALL ON THE LENGTH OF THE RUNNER, AND MOVE MORE FREELY.


CLIC

UFFF
THE MANEUVER REQUIRED CONSI-DERABLE STRENGTH, BUT HABU MANAGED TO PULL IT OFF.



* PRUSIK KNOT: A DEVICE TO AID ROPE CLIMBING



KISHI HAD PLUMMETED A DISTANCE OF THIRTY METERS.

THE LEVEL OF IMPACT FROM THAT WOULD BE SEVERE, AND THE ENTIRE FORCE OF GRAVITY WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE SAFETY BELT AROUND THE WAIST.

HE REALIZED THAT SUCH AN IMPACT WOULD CAUSE CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE TO KISHI'S ORGANS AND SPINE.

GUFFF

NOW STOP TALKING!

ALL RIGHT!

HARD TO BREATHE...

HAH

HAH

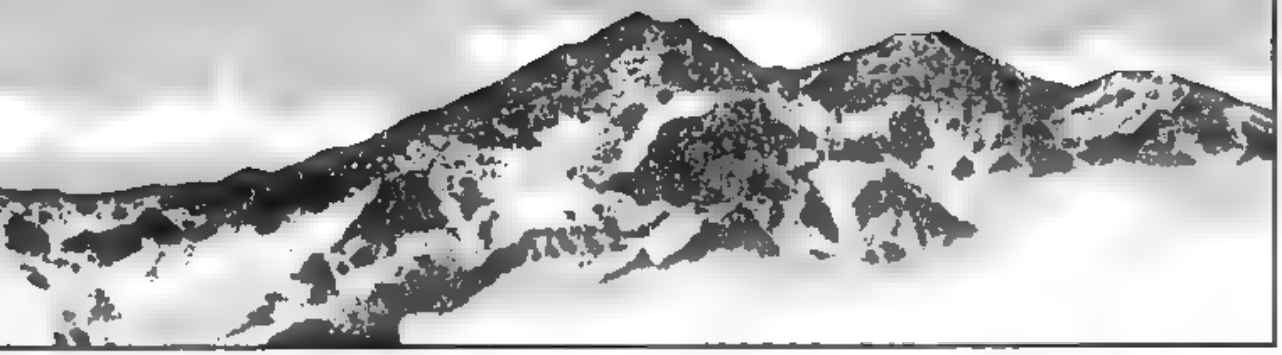
AND IT'S KIND OF...

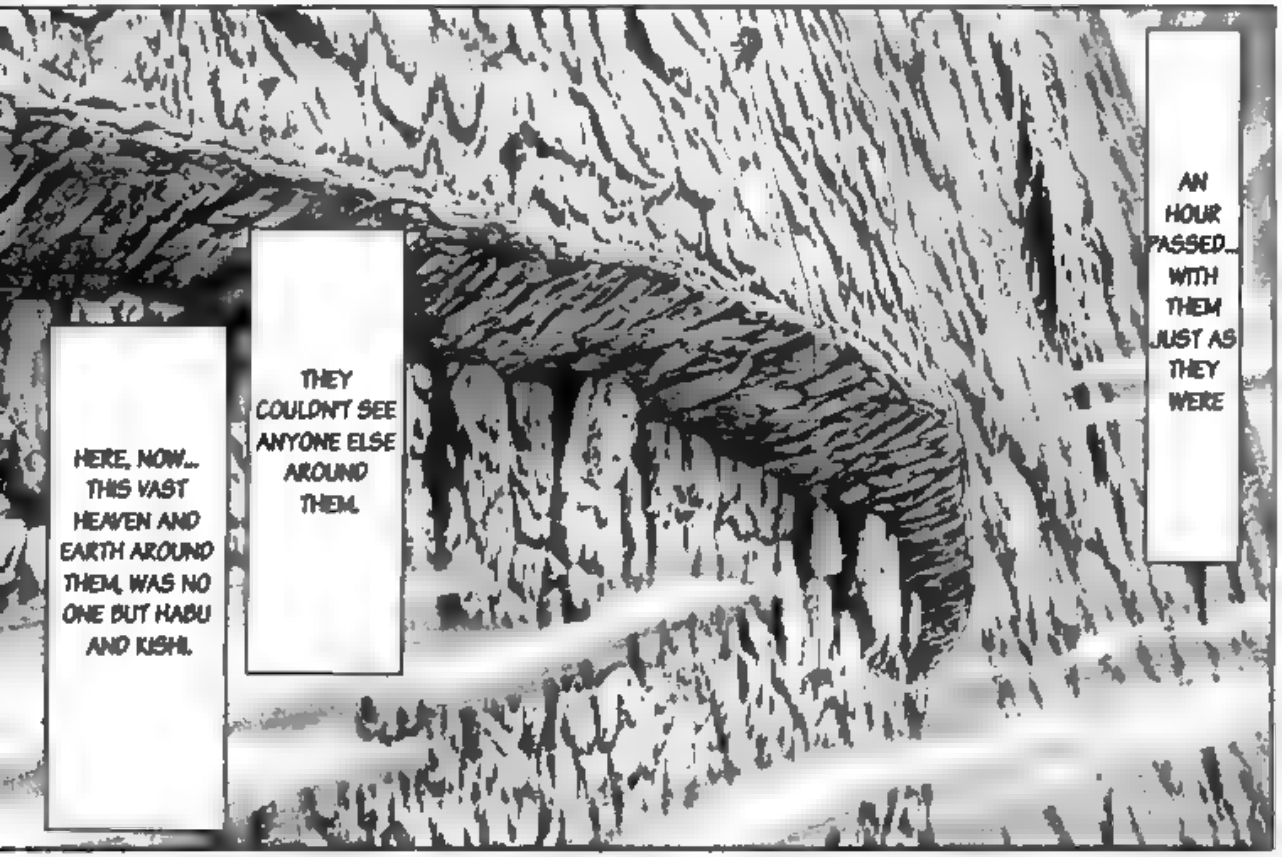
I THINK IT'S PROBABLY DISLOCATED...

HAH

HAH

I CAN'T MOVE MY LEFT ARM...




AN HOUR PASSED... WITH THEM JUST AS THEY WERE
THEY COULDN'T SEE ANYONE ELSE AROUND THEM.
HERE, NOW... THIS VAST HEAVEN AND EARTH AROUND THEM, WAS NO ONE BUT HABU AND KISHI.

THOUGH IT WAS A WASTE, HE HAD TO KEEP CALLING OUT TO KISHI.
HEYYYY! KISHI!
ARE YOU STILL AWAKE?
DON'T PASS OUT ON ME!

KISHI AND I WILL BOTH DIE.
IF WE JUST STAY LIKE THIS...

I HAVE TO ASK FOR SOMETHING...

YOU THERE?

MISTER HABIL...

THE...
THE ROPE...

WHAT IS IT?

THE ROPE...
GUFFF
PLEASE CUT IT...

I'M SORRY...
I'M SO SORRY...

...

DON'T BE A FOOL!

EVEN IF HE WERE TO LEAVE KISHI HERE TO GO CALL FOR HELP, HE WOULD NEED THE ROPE.
HABU WAS AT A COMPLETE LOSS.
Byuuu
KISHI!
ARE YOU STILL WITH ME? KISHI?
BUT HE WAS NEVER ABLE TO LIFT HIM UP MORE THAN TWO METERS.
RAS
UGHHH
HE TRIED AGAIN AND AGAIN TO TAKE HOLD OF THE ROPE AND HEAVE KISHI UP.

KISHIIIII
EVEN THE FEW WORDS THEY HAD BEEN EXCHANGING FREQUENTLY WERE BECOMING PROGRESSIVELY MORE AND MORE DISCONNECTED

KISHI'S RESPONSES HAD GOTTEN WAKER.

ANSWER ME!

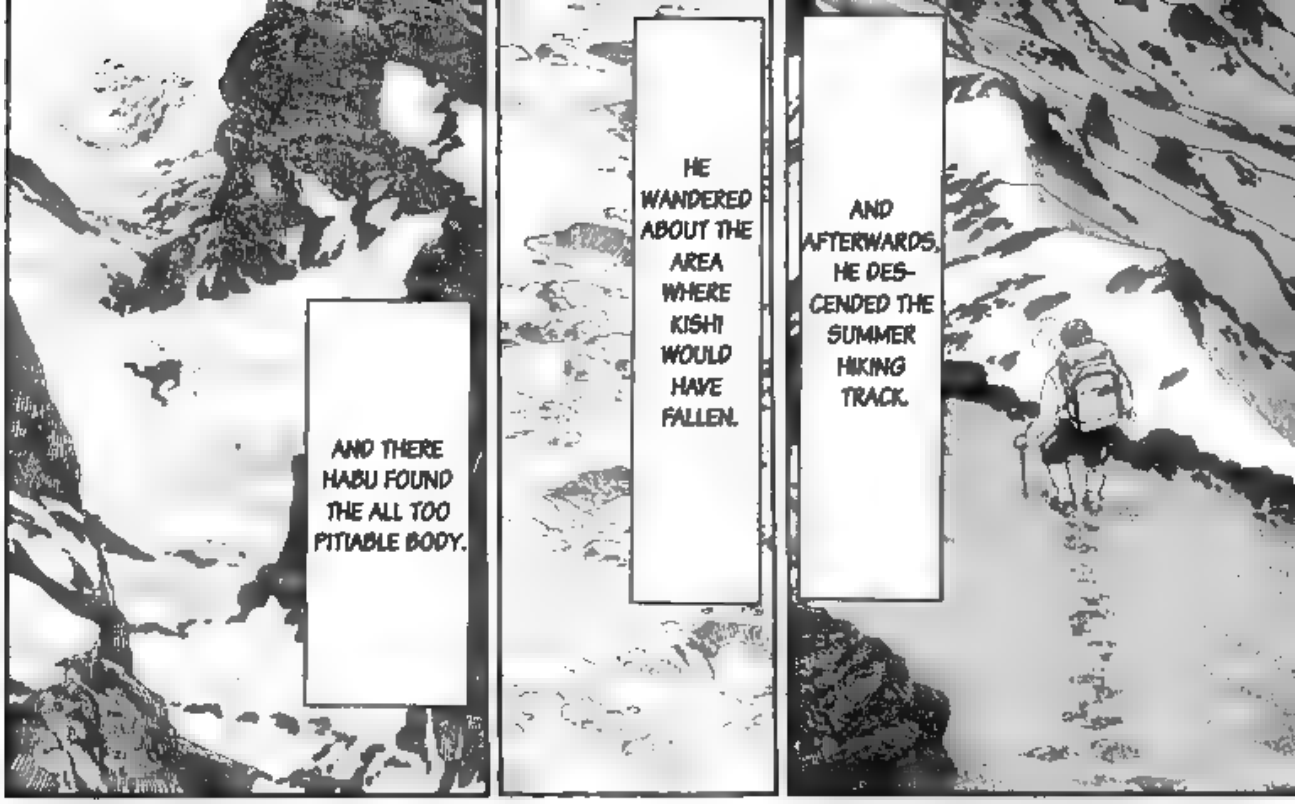
Y...
YES...

TWO HOURS PASSED...
WHILE THE TWO MEN HANGING FROM THE ROCK WALL WERE ASSAULTED MERCILESSLY BY THE COLD

TIME CREPT BY LANGUIDLY.
FFF
FFF
HABU ALSO REACHED A POINT OF EXHAUSTION.
KISHI...!
HEY!!
KISHI! ANSWER MEEE!!
GRAG
ZASS
ZASS
...!

KISHI!!!!!
KISHI!
HE PEERED OVER THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF, BUT HE COULDN'T SEE KISHI'S BODY THERE.
THE ROPE WAS FLICKING, DANCING IN THE WIND.
IT CAN'T BE...
IT...
HABU FRANTICALLY HAULED UP THE ROPE.

iKSE
KISHI...
HAS FALLEN!
ON THE SEVERED END OF THE ROPE WERE THE FRAYED THREADS WHERE IT HAD BEEN WORN APART AGAINST THE ROCK.
KISHIIII
Byuuuu
HE CLIMBED ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP OF THE CLIFF.
HAH
HE CLIMBED ALONE, HIS UTTERLY EXHAUSTED BODY SUPPORTED BY FORCE OF WILL.
HAH
HABU CLIMBED.


AND THERE HABU FOUND THE ALL TOO PITIABLE BODY.
HE WANDERED ABOUT THE AREA WHERE KISHI WOULD HAVE FALLEN.
AND AFTERWARDS, HE DES-CENDED THE SUMMER HIKING TRACK.

BYUUUUU

ZAC
BYUUUUU

HABU RETURNED TO TOKUSAWA CABIN CARRYING KISHI'S BODY ON HIS BACK.
BYUUUU
ZAC
WH.. WHAT'S HAPPENED?

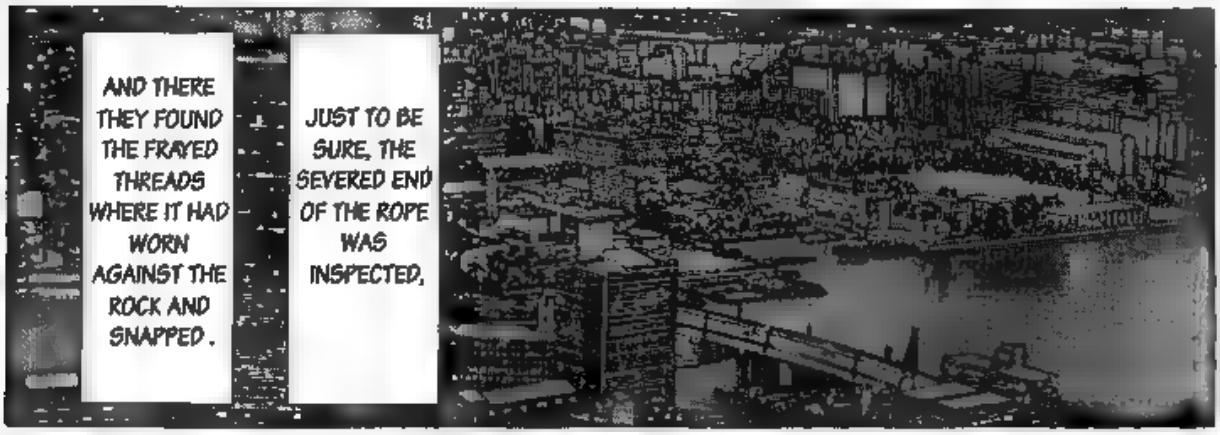
SO THAT SAME EVENING...
RRR

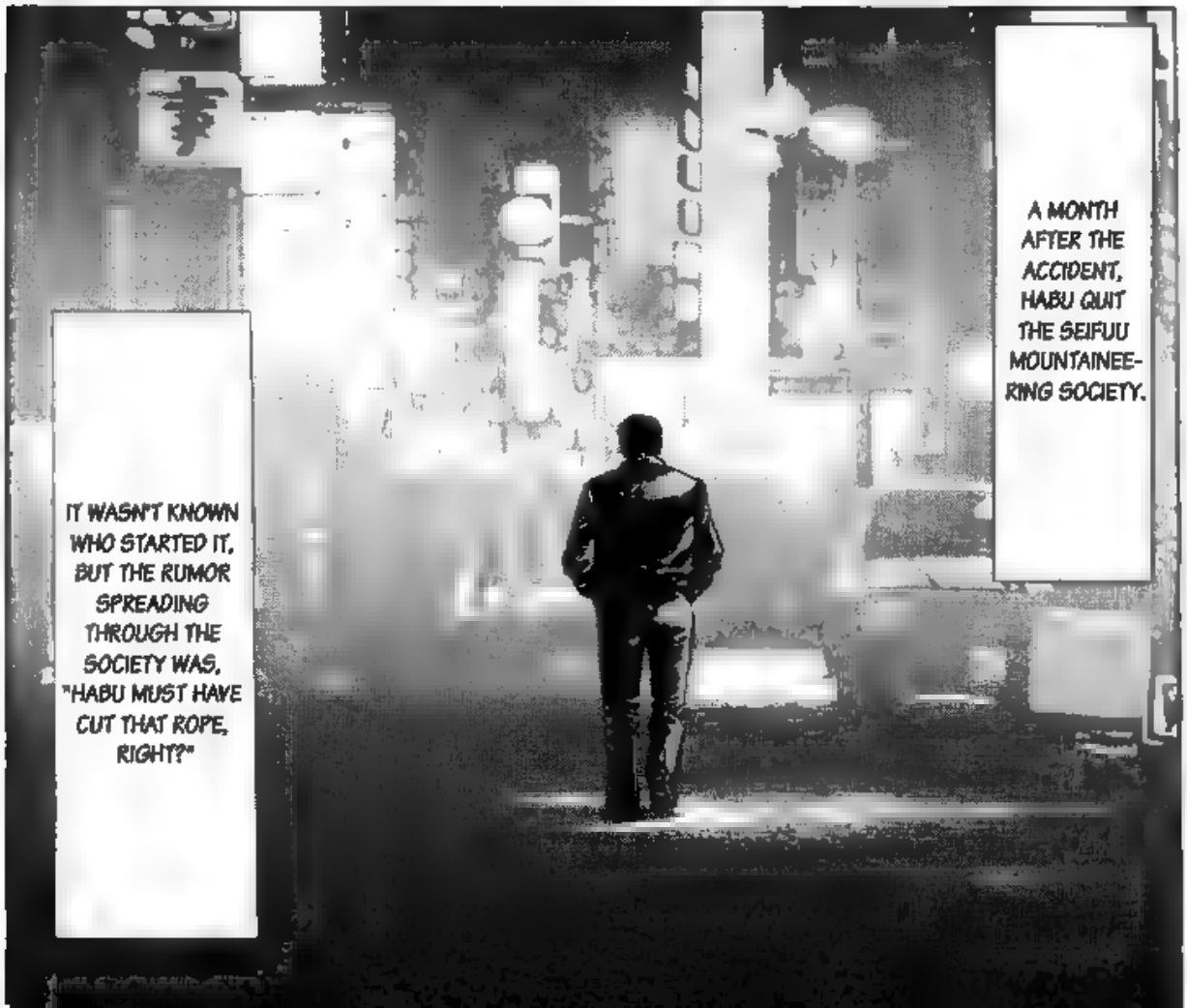
...
IT GOT...
IT'S A SCRAPING AGAINST THE EDGE OF THE ROCK.

THE ROPE...
IT GOT SEVERED!
BLOOD

THE ROPE, IT GOT...
IT GOT SEVERED!

HABU TOLD THE SAME STORY TO THE POLICE AND THOSE IN THE SEIFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY.
AN ACCIDENT. THAT'S WHAT IT WAS JUDGED TO BE.


AND THERE THEY FOUND THE FRAYED THREADS WHERE IT HAD WORN AGAINST THE ROCK AND SNAPPED.
JUST TO BE SURE, THE SEVERED END OF THE ROPE WAS INSPECTED.


A MONTH AFTER THE ACCIDENT, HABU QUIT THE SEIFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY.
IT WASN'T KNOWN WHO STARTED IT, BUT THE RUMOR SPREADING THROUGH THE SOCIETY WAS, "HABU MUST HAVE CUT THAT ROPE, RIGHT?"

HABU HAD SAID THOSE EXACT WORDS.

"IF IT WERE ME, I'D CUT THE ROPE!"

THEY SAY THE END OF THE ROPE HAD SEVERED AFTER SCRAPING ON THE ROCKS.

YEAH, BUT...

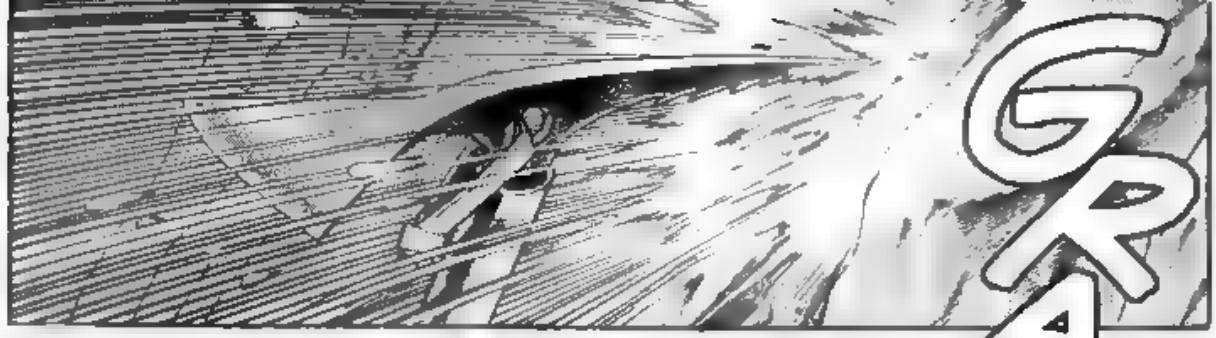
BEING HIM, I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF HE DID IT!

BUT YOU COULD EASILY FAKE SOMETHING LIKE THAT AFTER THE FACT, COULDN'T YOU?

THE REASON SUCH RUMORS WERE PREGNANT WITH A SENSE OF TRUTH WAS BECAUSE THEIR SUBJECT WAS JOUJI HABU.

OF COURSE, THEY WEREN'T BEING SERIOUS, BUT IT WAS THOSE WORDS, "SINCE IT WAS HABU..."

BUT THEN,
AT THE SAME TIME, ANOTHER
CLIMBING
GENIUS
HAD BEGUN TO
COME TO THE FORE


GRAC

HIS NAME WAS TSUNEO HASE.

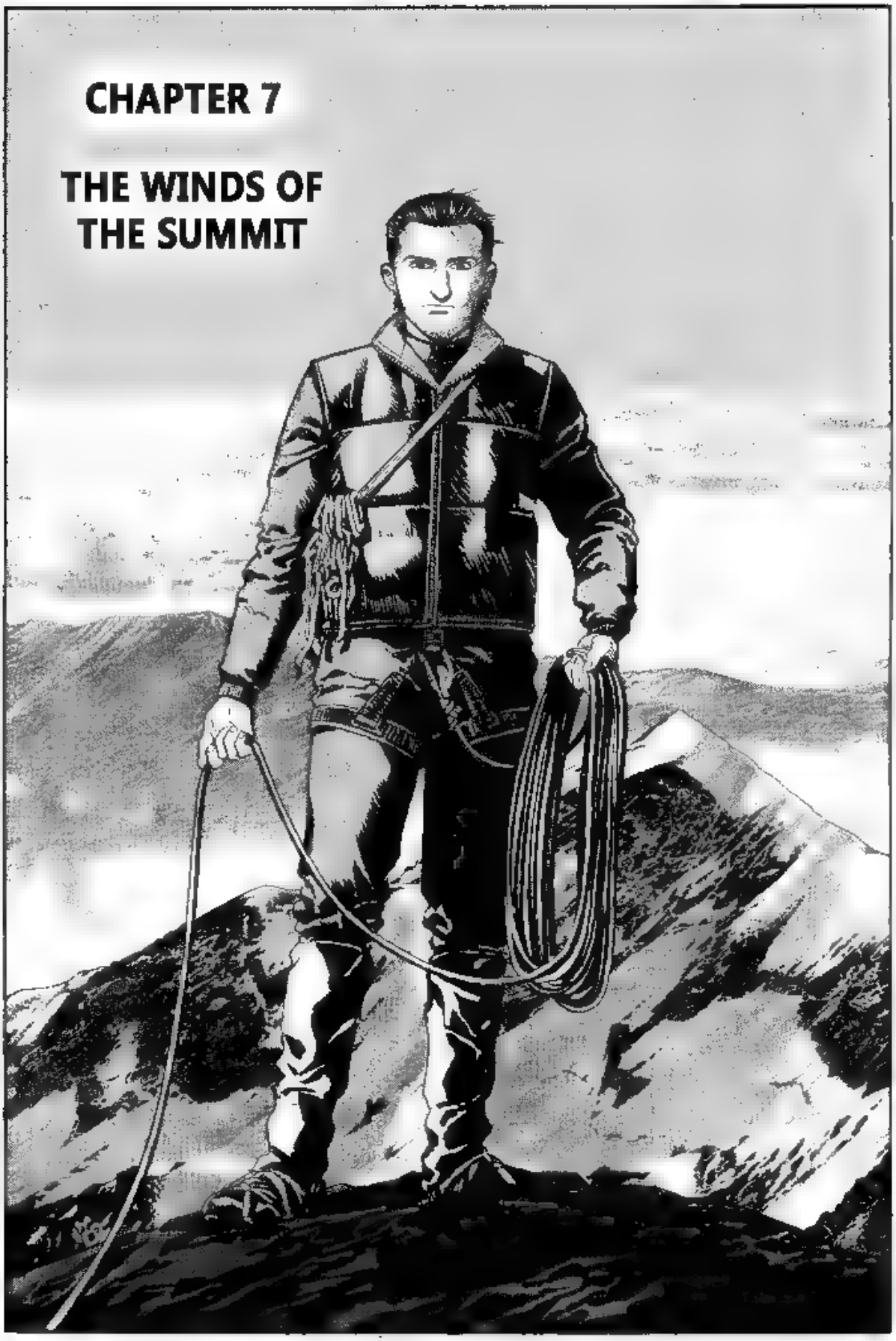
IN 1969, AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-TWO, HE COMPLETED THE FIRST CLIMB OF MYOJO MOUNTAIN'S SOUTH WALL RIGHT FACE ROUTE.

HE WAS THREE YEARS YOUNGER THAN HABU... A SOLO CLIMBER.

HAH
HAH
HE WAS THE FIRST TO CLIMB MOUNT TANIGAWA'S ICHINOKURASAWA TAKIZAWA GULLY SLAB IN WINTER.
IN FEBRUARY OF THE FOLLOWING YEAR, IN 1970, NEAR THE DEMON SLAB ROUTE WHICH HABU HAD CONQUERED.
IT WAS OF LESS DIFFICULTY THAN THE DEMON SLAB.
BUT WHAT WAS SO AMAZING ABOUT HASE WAS THAT HE'D SCALED THE ROUTE ALL BY HIMSELF.

CHAPTER 7

THE WINDS OF THE SUMMIT



HOW CONSCIOUS WAS JOUJI HABU OF TSUNEO HASE AT THE TIME

HE WAS ONLY THREE YEARS YOUNGER THAN HABU, BUT...

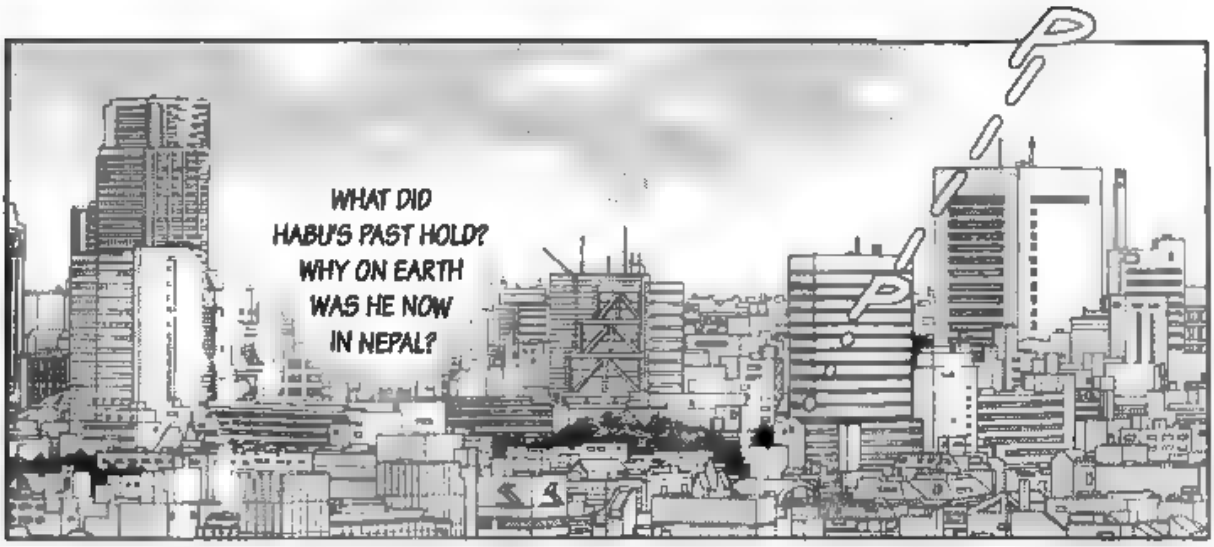
AT LEAST, THAT'S HOW HABU WOULD HAVE VIEWED IT
HASE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH A NEW GENERATION OF CLIMBERS.

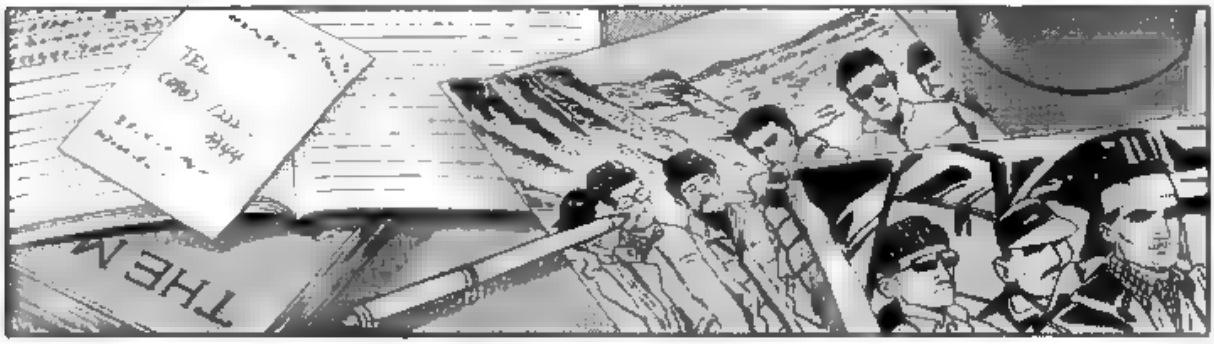
THERE WAS MUCH PARITY BETWEEN HABU AND HASE IN TERMS OF TALENT AND ABILITY.

BUT... THERE WAS ONE DEFINITE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM.

AND PERHAPS THE DESTINIES THAT AWAITED EACH OF THEM.
THAT DIFFERENCE WAS ABOVE ALL ELSE, THEIR INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITIES AND CHARACTER.

COMPARED TO HABU, WHO ALWAYS VEILED HIMSELF IN SHADOWS
HASE HAD A WIND-LIKE FRESHNESS ABOUT HIM IN BOTH HIS TEMPERAMENT AND CLIMBING STYLE


WHAT DID HABU'S PAST HOLD? WHY ON EARTH WAS HE NOW IN NEPAL?



THE MORE FUKAMACHI CAME TO EMBRACE A DEEP INTEREST IN JOUJI HABU THE MAN HIMSELF.

BUT THE MORE DATA HE COLLECTED,
ORIGINALLY HE'D STARTED HIS INVESTI-GATIONS TO FIND OUT WHAT HABU WAS DOING AT PRESENT.

ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF MAKIO INOUE, FUKAMACHI ASKED KATSUHIKO TADA OF "GRANDES JORASSES" FOR AN INTERVIEW.
GRANDES JORASSES HAD BEEN FOUNDED IN THE EARLY 70S AND WAS NOW A FULL-SCALE JAPANESE MANUFACTURER OF CLIMBING GEAR.

YES, WELL...
IF IT'S FOR ABOUT AN HOUR, I THINK I CAN FIND THE TIME FOR YOU

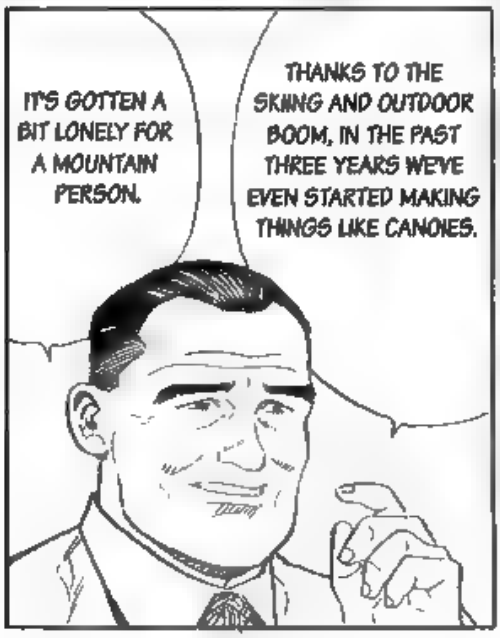
FUKAMACHI MET TADA AT THE HEAD OFFICE HE'DE BEEN DIRECTED TO IN GOTANDA.

IT WA SAID HE WAS THE PERSON WHO BEST KNEW ABOUT HABU AFTER HE'D QUIT THE SEIFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY.

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
I BROUGHT HABU INTO THE COMPANY AS OUR FIRST FIELD TESTER.
BLUP
BLUP

FOR TAKING THE TROUBLE.
OH, THANK YOU
HERE YOU GO.

NOT A FULL COMPANY EMPLOYEE. HE WAS FREELANCE.
ALTHOUGH
...

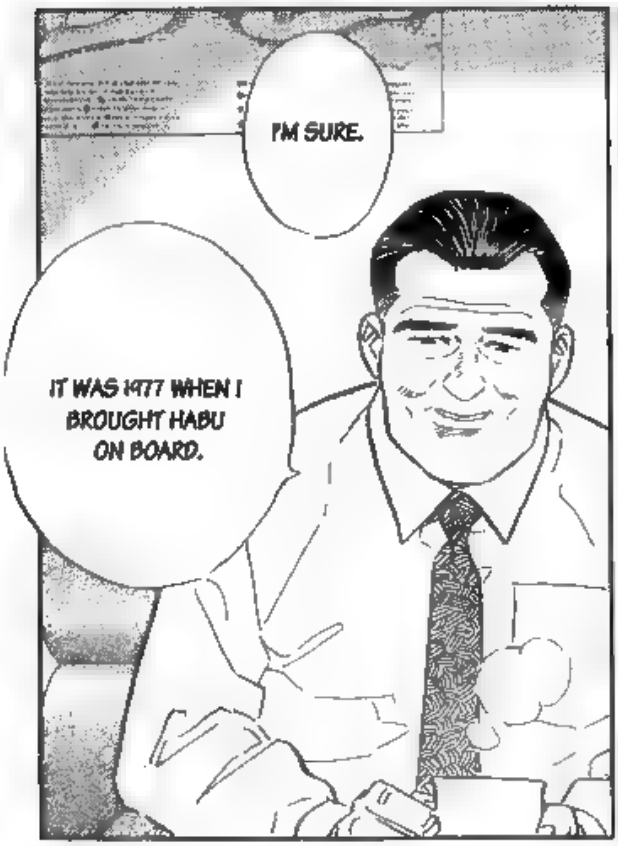

IT'S GOTTEN A BIT LONELY FOR A MOUNTAIN PERSON.
THANKS TO THE SKIING AND OUTDOOR BOOM, IN THE PAST THREE YEARS WE'VE EVEN STARTED MAKING THINGS LIKE CANOES.

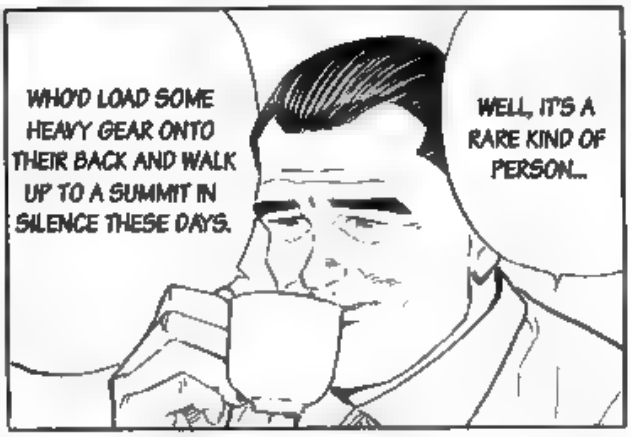
I WAS ORIGINALLY A MOUNTAIN CLIMBER SO I'M USED TO DOING EVERYTHING MYSELF.
YOU'RE WELCOME.

...
EVEN THINGS LIKE TENTS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT THAT WE PUT OUT ARE MORE OFTEN OF THE "FAMILY-ORIENTED" VARIETY, YOU SEE?
YES.
THEY DON'T NEED TO BE PARTICULARLY SMALL OR LIGHT-WEIGHT.

THERE ARE FEWER PEOPLE ACTUALLY CLIMBING?
SO YOU MEAN NOW...

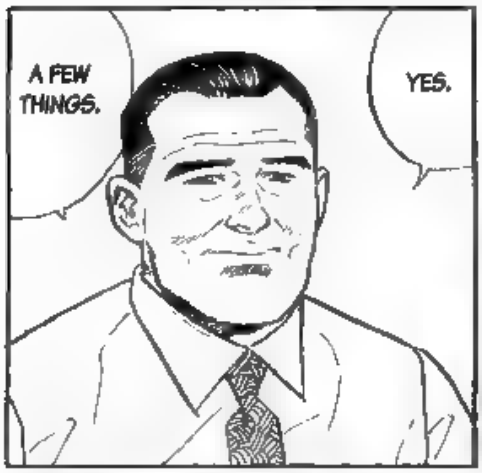
AS LONG AS IT'S SMALL ENOUGH TO LOAD INTO YOUR CAR, THAT'S PLENTY, YOU SEE.
DOESN'T NECESSARILY HAVE TO BE SOMETHING YOU CAN STRAP ON YOUR BACK AND CARRY UP A MOUNTAIN.
EVEN, SAY, A GAS STOVE.

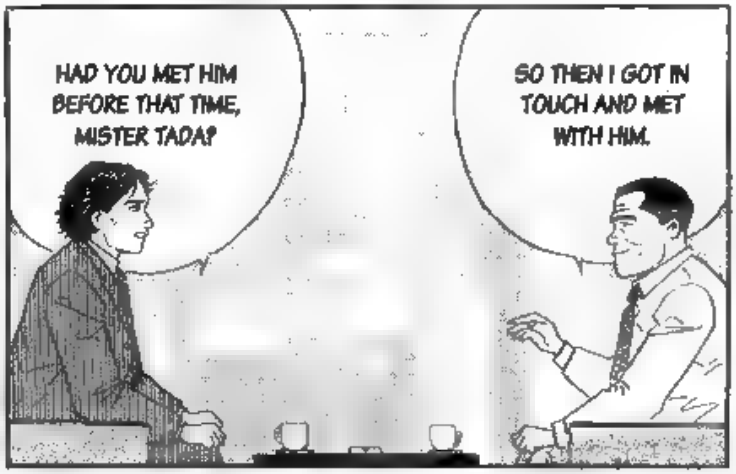

I'M SURE.
IT WAS 1977 WHEN I BROUGHT HABU ON BOARD.

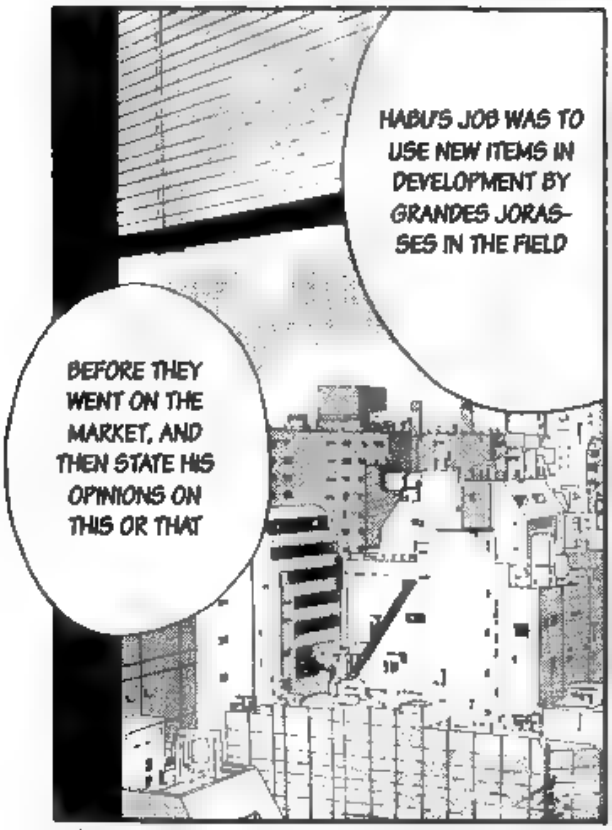

WHO'D LOAD SOME HEAVY GEAR ONTO THEIR BACK AND WALK UP TO A SUMMIT IN SILENCE THESE DAYS.
WELL, IT'S A RARE KIND OF PERSON...

...

I HEARD THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE THAT HABU WAS LOOKING FOR WORK
I THINK IT WAS AFTER THAT THING WITH THE SEIFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY... WHEN HE QUIT BECAUSE OF THE SEVERED ROPE INCIDENT.

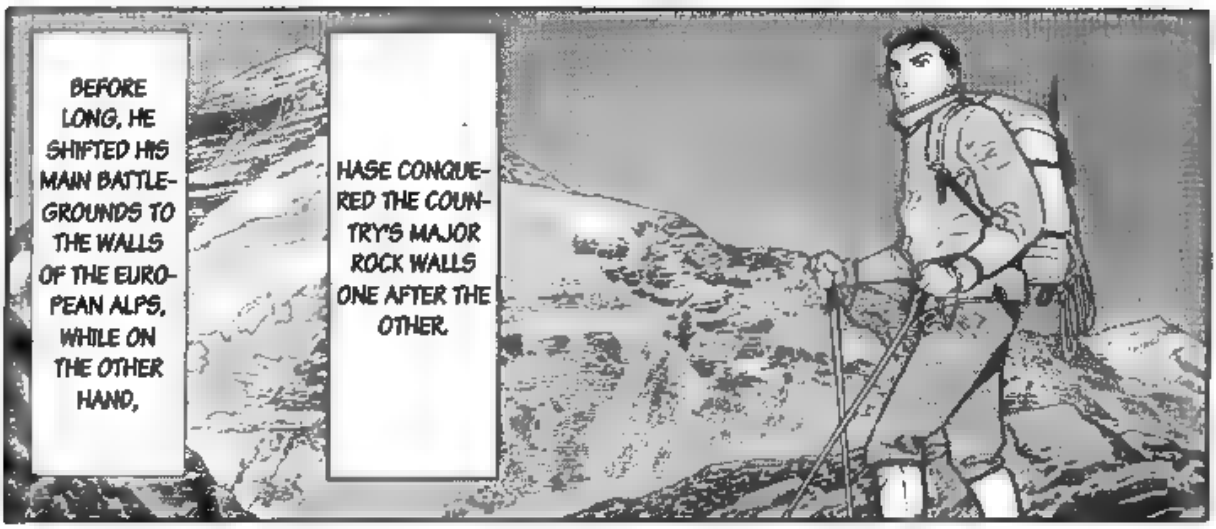

A FEW THINGS.
YES.


HAD YOU MET HIM BEFORE THAT TIME, MISTER TADA?
SO THEN I GOT IN TOUCH AND MET WITH HIM.


HABU'S JOB WAS TO USE NEW ITEMS IN DEVELOPMENT BY GRANDES JORASSES IN THE FIELD
BEFORE THEY WENT ON THE MARKET, AND THEN STATE HIS OPINIONS ON THIS OR THAT

AND BEING THAT SAME HABU WHO DID THE DEMON SLAB,
THE COMPANY WAS QUICK TO GIVE THE OK.

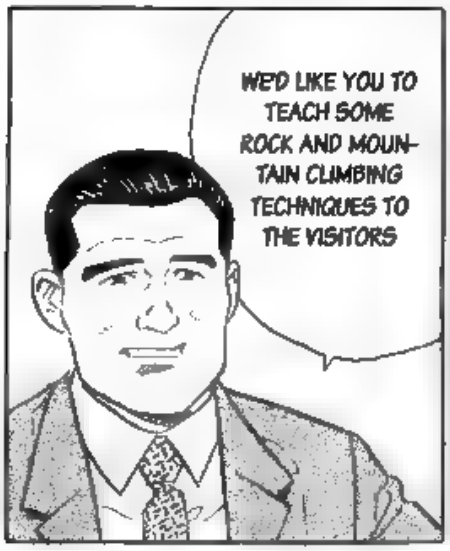
AFTER QUITTING THE SEIFUU MOUNTAINEERING SOCIETY FOLLOWING BUNTAROU KISHI'S DEATH, HABU BEGAN TO FAVOR TRAVELLING ON HIS OWN.

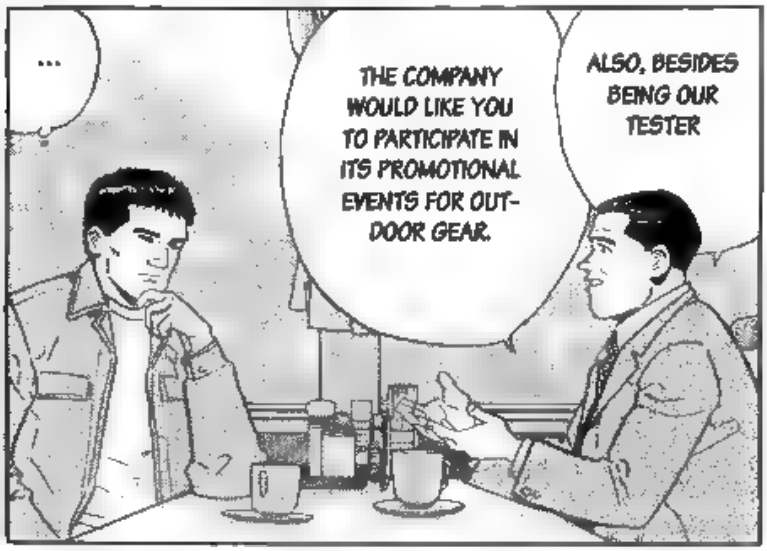

BEFORE LONG, HE SHIFTED HIS MAIN BATTLEGROUNDS TO THE WALLS OF THE EUROPEAN ALPS, WHILE ON THE OTHER HAND,
HASE CONQUERED THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR ROCK WALLS ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

HABU WAS STILL FIXATED ON DOMESTIC ROCK CLIMBS.

WILL YOU TAKE ON THE JOB?
IT'S NOT A BAD OFFER.

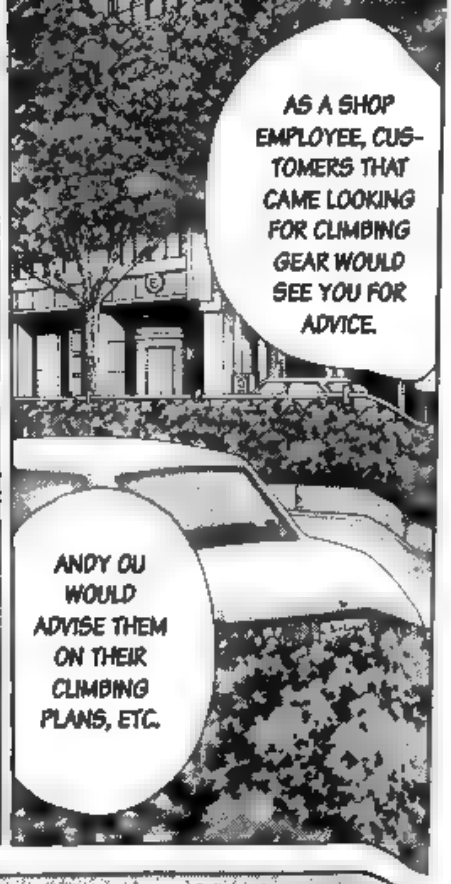
SO WHAT DO YOU SAY, HABU?


WE'D LIKE YOU TO TEACH SOME ROCK AND MOUNTAIN CLIMBING TECHNIQUES TO THE VISITORS

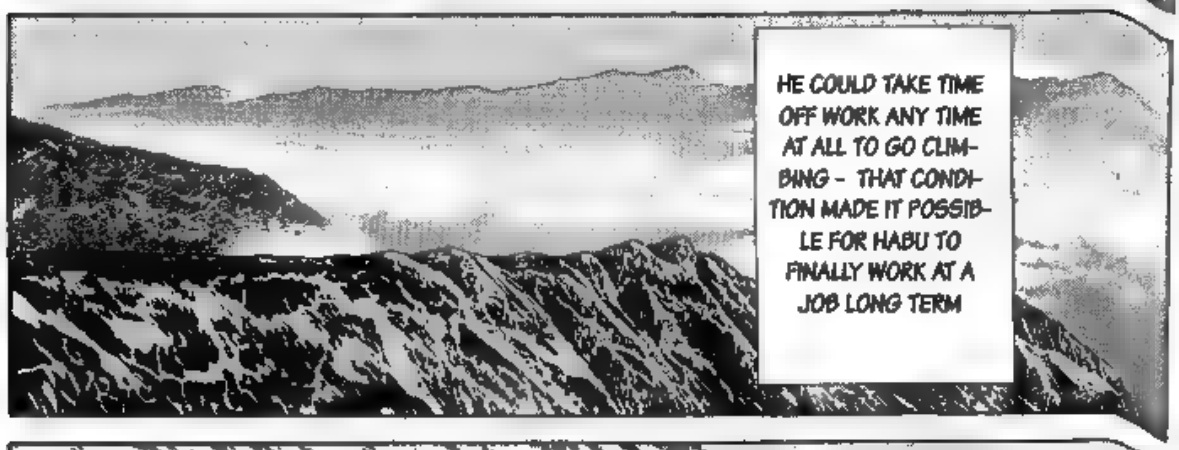

...
THE COMPANY WOULD LIKE YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN ITS PROMOTIONAL EVENTS FOR OUTDOOR GEAR.
ALSO, BESIDES BEING OUR TESTER

SO WE'D ALSO WNAT YOU TO ACT A SALES CONSULTANT IN A MOUNTAINEERING GEAR RETAIL SHOP THAR DEALS IN GRANDES JORASSES PRODUCTS.
WELL, AT ANY RATE IT'S NOT THE KIND OF WORK THAT WILL BE ON ALL THE TIME.

DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION, YOU MIGHT EVEN ACT AS THEIR GUIDE.


AS A SHOP EMPLOYEE, CUSTOMERS THAT CAME LOOKING FOR CLIMBING GEAR WOULD SEE YOU FOR ADVICE.
ANDY OU WOULD ADVISE THEM ON THEIR CLIMBING PLANS, ETC.

YEAH... SURE...
CAN I GET YOU TO SAY YES?
WHAT DO YOU THINK?


HE COULD TAKE TIME OFF WORK ANY TIME AT ALL TO GO CLIMBING - THAT CONDITION MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR HABU TO FINALLY WORK AT A JOB LONG TERM

HIS WORK AS AN ADVISOR AT A CLIMBING GEAR SHOP CALLED "GAKUSUIKAN" CONTINUED FOR EIGHT YEARS, UNTIL THE EVENTUAL HIMALAYAN ACCIDENT.
HE ONLY HELD THE JOB AS TESTER FOR GRANDES JORASSES FOR A FEW SHORT YEARS, BUT...

BUT INCRE-DIBLY...
EERING EXPEDITION SHOP
スポーツ登山専門店

ヒマラヤ
ホテル
/20000-
特価品
¥68000
DURING THIS PERIOD, HABU SPENT QUITE A LOT OF HIS DAYS ON THE JOB.

HE WAS STILL ACTIVELY GOING TO THE MOUNTAIN FOR CLIMBS, BUT...

HE NO LONGER WENT SO FAR AS TO THROW HIS LIVELIHOOD AWAY TO GO CLIMBING AS HE HAD BEFORE.

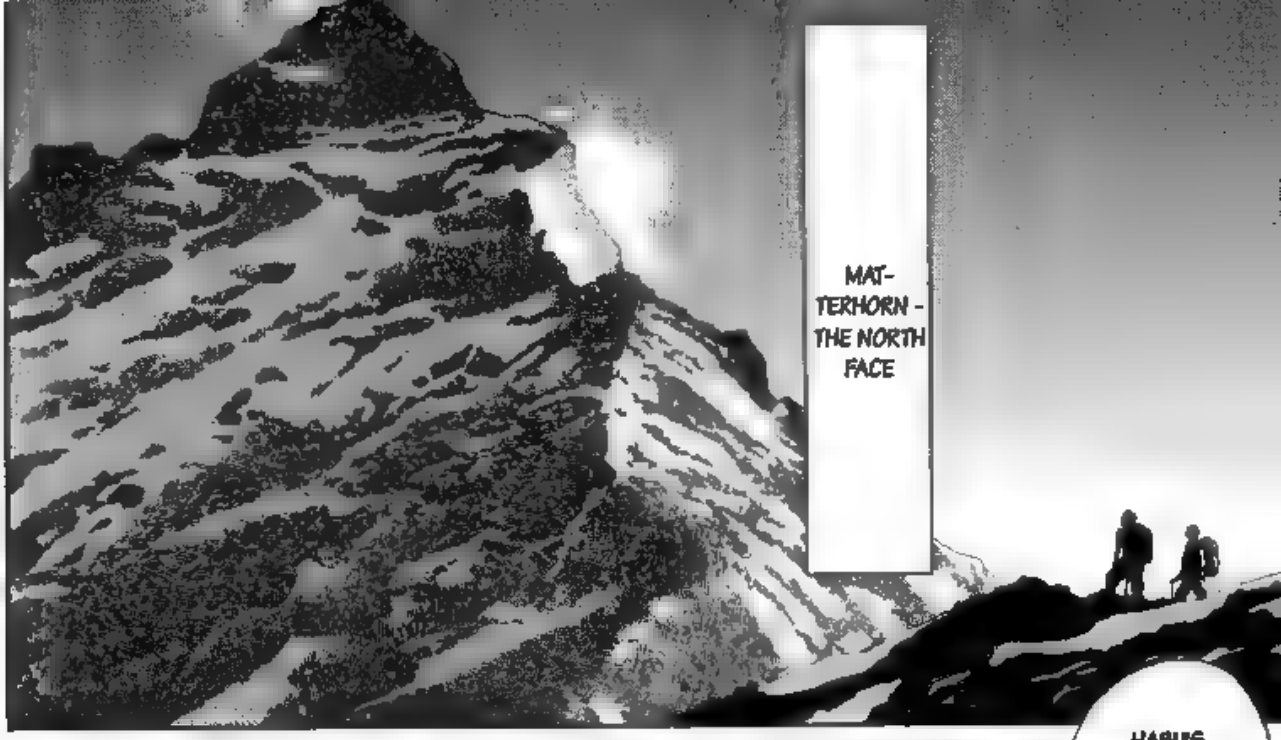
SUMMER, 1977... HABU CLIMBED HIS FIRST MOUNTAIN OVERSEAS.

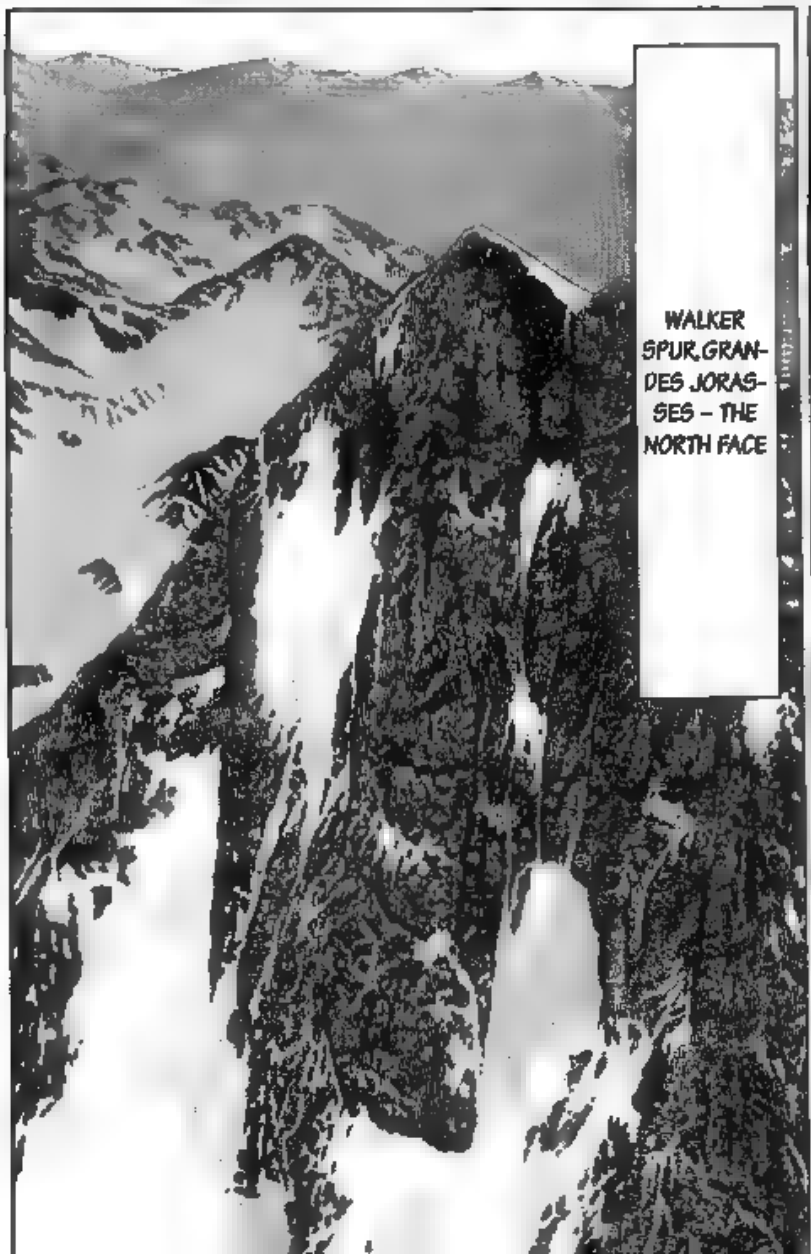
HABU WAS THIRTY-THREE, TADA WAS THIRTY-SEVEN.

HE WASN'T ALONE AT THE TIME.

TADA HIMSELF, FOUR YEARS OLDER THAN HABU, WENT ALONG WITH HIM.

EIGER-
THE
NORTH
FACE
IN THE SPACE OF THAT ONE SUMMER, THEY SCALED THREE WALLS.
HE WAS WHAT YOU CALL A GENIUS.
MAKE NO MIS-TAKE.


MAT-
TERHORN -
THE NORTH
FACE


WALKER
SPUR, GRAN-
DES JORAS-
SES - THE
NORTH FACE

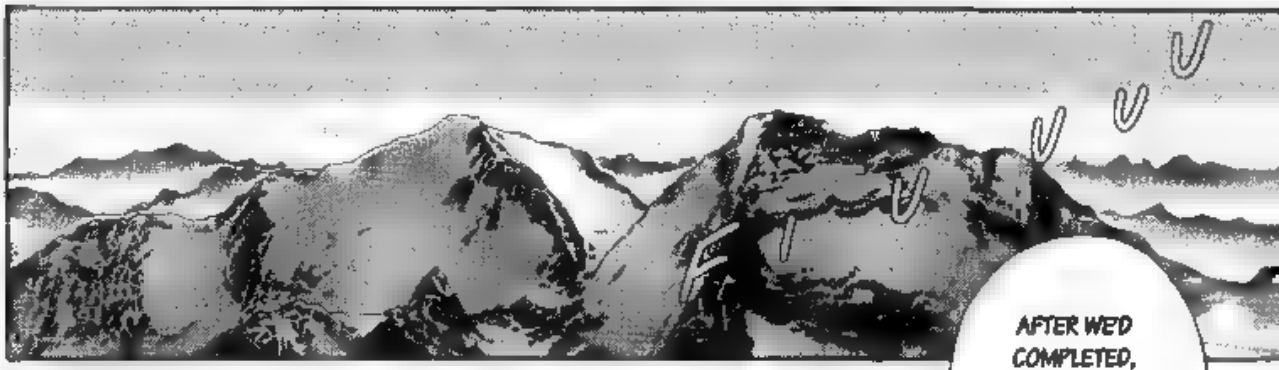
HABU'S
CLIMBING
TECHNIQUE
WAS TRULY
...
SOME-
THING
TO
BEHOLD
.

HE WOULD GET PERPLEXED.
BUT WHEN HE DID, THAT'S WOULD MAKE HIM MORE DETERMINED.
HE WAS NEVER AT A LOSS ON A ROCK WALL.
NO... THAT'S NOT ENTIRELY ACCURATE.
AND THEN HE WOULD CLEAR IT.
HE'D BECOME ANGRY AT HIMSELF BOR BEING AFRAID OF THE ROCK AND WANTED TO PUNISH HIMSELF. HE'D BATER HIS HANDS ON THOSE DIFFICULT ROCK SURFACES.
ALMOST AS IF...
HE WOULD REACH HIS HANDS U PINTO THE MOST DIFFICULT PLACES.

FOR EXAMPLE?
LIKE WHAT ABOUT HIM?
WELL ...
IT WAS... SOMETHING THAT HAPPENEDE AFTER WE'D DONE THOSE THREE WALLS.

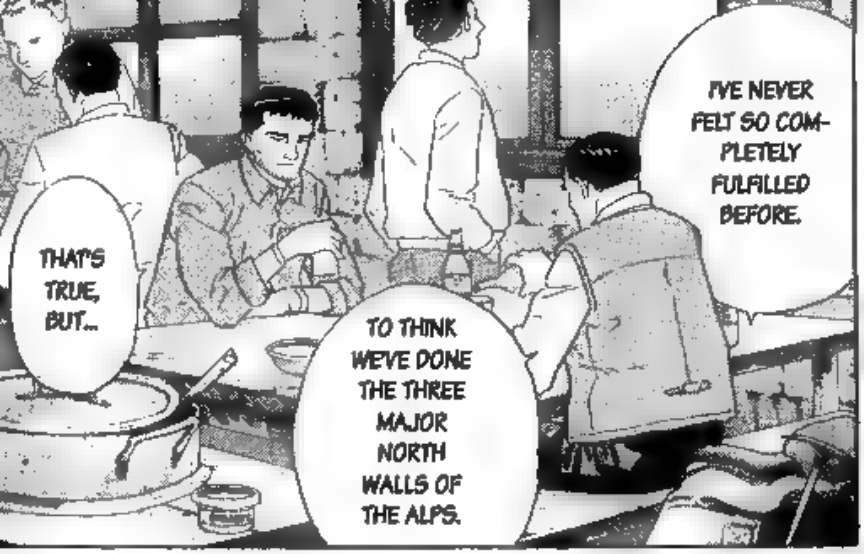
NATURALLY...
THERE WERE THINGS ABOUT THIM YOU COULDN'T GRASP WITH YOUR REGULAR SENSES.

TO BE SURE... HABU WAS AN UNUSUAL GUY.


AFTER WE'D COMPLETED, THE LAST ONE, THE WALKER SPUR.

GLUP
GLUP
GLUP

I WAS DRINKING A BEER IN CELEBRATION WITH HIM AT THE LESCHAUX HUT.


THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
TO THINK WE'VE DONE THE THREE MAJOR NORTH WALLS OF THE ALPS.
I'VE NEVER FELT SO COMPLETELY FULFILLED BEFORE.

THAT HITS THE SPOT.
PUFFF

THE DREGS ?
HUH?!

LIKE THE DREGS.
FOR ME, IT WAS LIKE...

THE NORTH WALLS HAVE TO BE DONE IN WINTER.
DOING ANY WALL AT ALL IS NO BIG DEAL IN SUMMER.
YES.

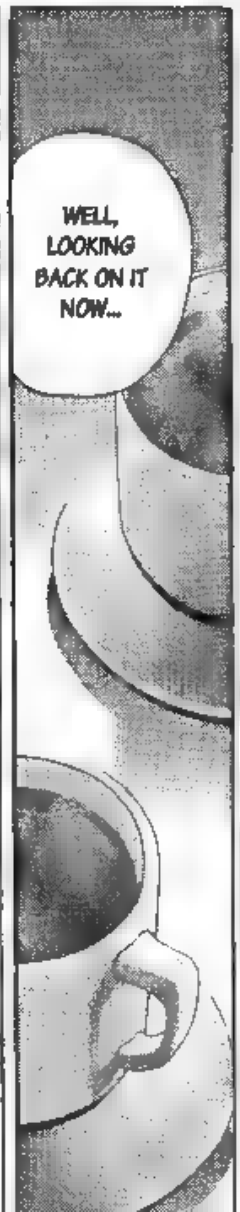
...

SLUP
THEN IT'S MEANINGLESS.
AND IF WE'RE NOT THE FIRST TO DO THEM

...
BUT THAT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU SAY TO THE PERSON YOU'D JUST COMPLETED THE THREEE GREAT NORTH FACES WITH ONLY MOMENTS EARLIER.
BUT HE WAS SERIOUS, HE WAS FREE TO THING WHATEVER HE WANTED.

AT FIRST...
I THOUGHT MAYBE HE WAS JOKING.

I THINK THAT'S...
HOW KEENLY CONSCIOUS HE MUST HAVE BEEN OF HASE.


WELL, LOOKING BACK ON IT NOW...

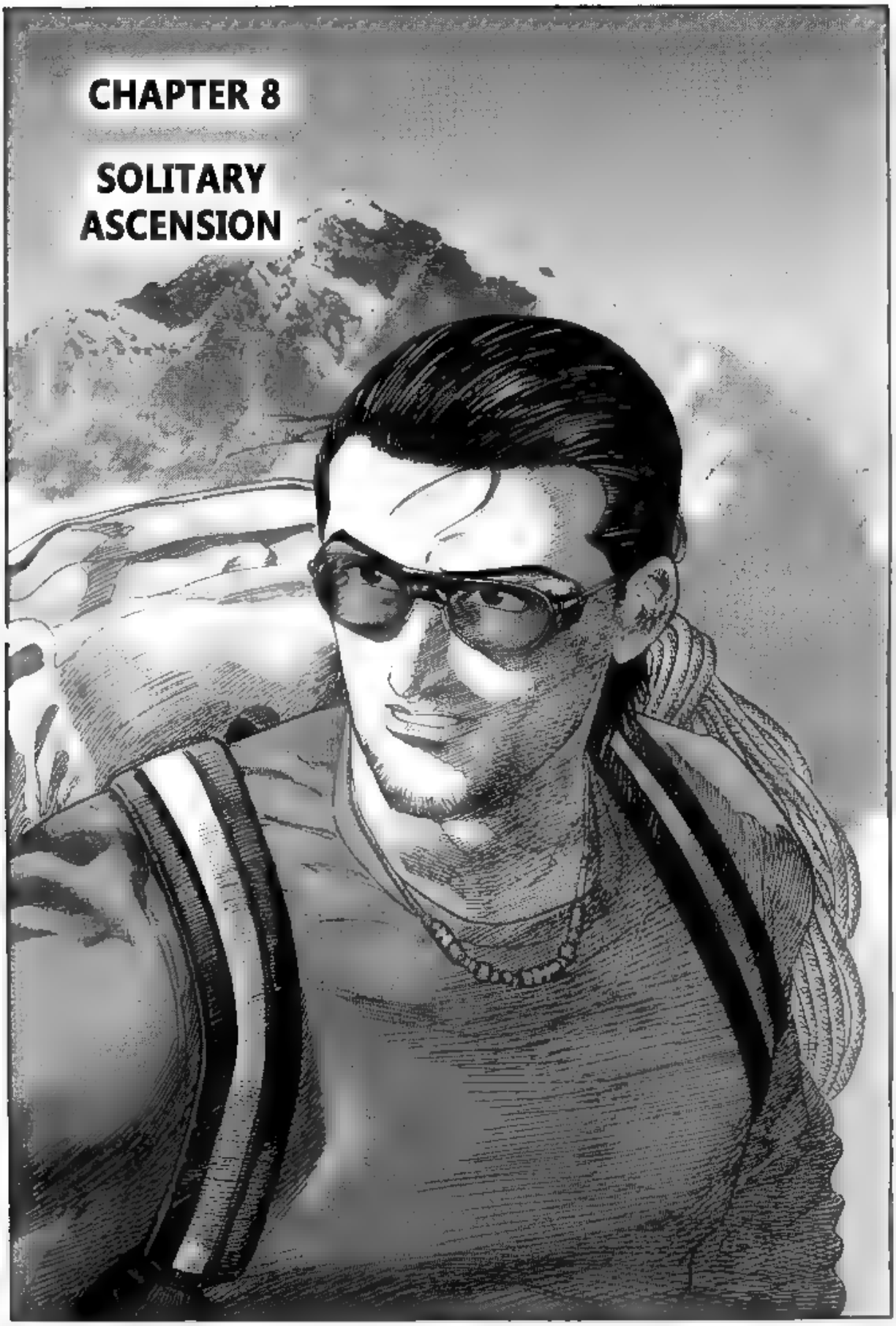
OUR EXPENSES WERE BEING COVERED BU GRANDES JORASSES. THAT'S NOT SOMETHING YOU SAY IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.
WHAT'S MORE, WE WERE TESTING NEW PRODUCTS ON THAT CLIMB AS WELL.

SO NOW I FAINTLY UNDERSTOOD THE REASON WHY HABU LOST PARTNERS.
...

1977... FEBRUARY. FIVE MONTHS BEFORE HABU AND TADA...
TSUNEO HASE CONFRONTED THE MATTERHORN'S NORTH WALL ALONE, AND STOOD ON ITS SUMMIT.
HAH
HAH
HAH
HAH
BUU

OF COURSE,
HE WAS THE
FIRST IN THE WORLD
TO SCALE THE
MATTERHORN'S
NORTH FACE
IN WINTER.
WHAT'S MORE
HE DID IT SOLO.

THIS WAS
THE ACHIEVEMENT
WHICH THRUST
TSUNEO HABE'S NAME
UP FROM THE
JAPANESE TO
THE WORLD STAGE.



CHAPTER 8

SOLITARY ASCENSION

EIGER – THE NORTH FACE

THE YEAR AFTER THE MATTERHORN, IN MARCH 1978, TSUNEO HAGE

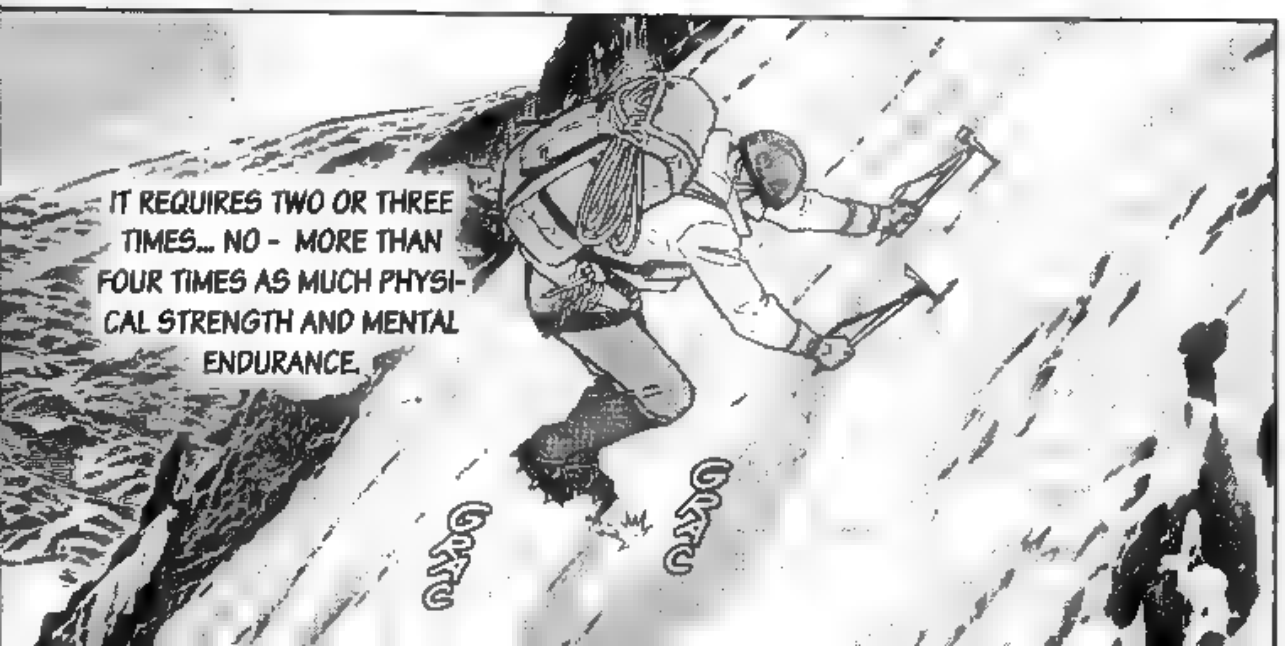
ATTEMPTED A SOLO ASCENT OF THE EIGER NORTH FACE.

SOLO ASCENT.

CRAC

HAH
HAH

IN BORTH ROCK CLIMBING AND ICE WALL CLIMBING, THE NORMAL METHOD IS FOR TWO OR MORE PEOPLE TO PROGRESS JOINED BY ROPE, BUT WHEN GOING ALONE...


IT REQUIRES TWO OR THREE TIMES... NO - MORE THAN FOUR TIMES AS MUCH PHYSICAL STRENGTH AND MENTAL ENDURANCE.
GRAC
GRAC

THAT YOU JAVE TO CARRY WITH YOU BASICALLY DOESN'T CHANGE AT ALL WHEKER YOU'RE ALONE OR IN A PAIR.

THE VOLUME AND NUMBER OF ITEMS OF CLIMBING GEAR, LIKE YOUR TENT, GAS STOVE, PITONS, KARA-BINERS, ROPES, ETC...

WHEN GOING SOLO YOU HAVE TO TAKE THAT ENTIRE HEAVY WEIGHT UP THE MOUN-TAIN WITH YOU ON YOUR OWN STRENGTH.

GRUNT

WHEN SCALING A WALL, FIRST YOU HAVE TO CLIMB UP IT WITHOUT ANY OF THE BAGGA-GE.

TO LOAD ON YOUR GEAR AND SCALE BACK UP AGAIN.
UFF
THEN, ONCE YOU'VE GONE UP, YOU HAVE TO RAPEL BACK DOWN TO YOUR ORIGINAL POSITION.
THE WORK OF BOTH THE LEAD AND SECOND POSITIONS ON THE ROPE ARE DONE BY ONE PERSON. THE TOTAL DISTANCE AND ELEVATION YOU CLIMB ARE DOUBLED.
HAH
HAH
THAT IS TO SAY; SCALE 2 TIMES THE SAME WALL.
CLIMB THEN DESCEND. DESCEND THEN CLIMB.
GRAG

BYUUU
SO WHILE CARVING YOUR WAY TO THE SUMMIT GOING UP AND DOWN... YOU SURVIVE THROUGH THE SEVERE DAYS OF BACK AND FORTH ON A BARE AMOUNT OF NOURISHMENT.

WHAT'S MORE, IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN CUT CORNERS WITH THE BIVOUAC GEAR.

SLUP
IN THE END YOU MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE BY CUTTING DOWN ON FOOD.

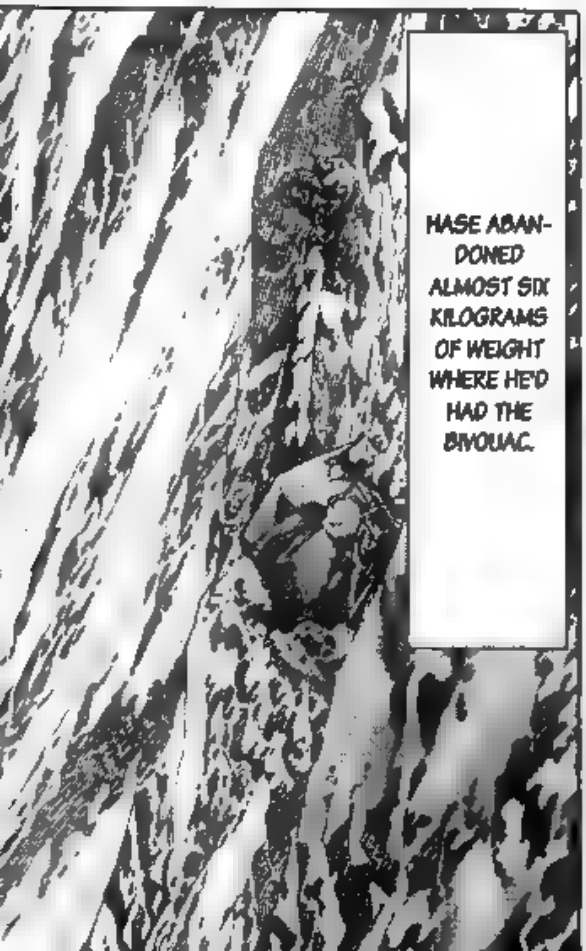
THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO CLIMB SOLO

MY PHYSICAL EXHAUSTION IS WORSE THAN I EXPECTED.
THIS IS BAD.
FUUU
HAH

BIVOUAC POINT, THIRD DAY
HAH
HAH

AND NUTS I CAN DO WITHOUT.
SOME ROCK PITONS...AND SPARE CRAMPONS

GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO LIGHTEN MY LOAD.


HASE ABANDONED ALMOST SIX KILOGRAMS OF WEIGHT WHERE HE'D HAD THE BIVOUAC.

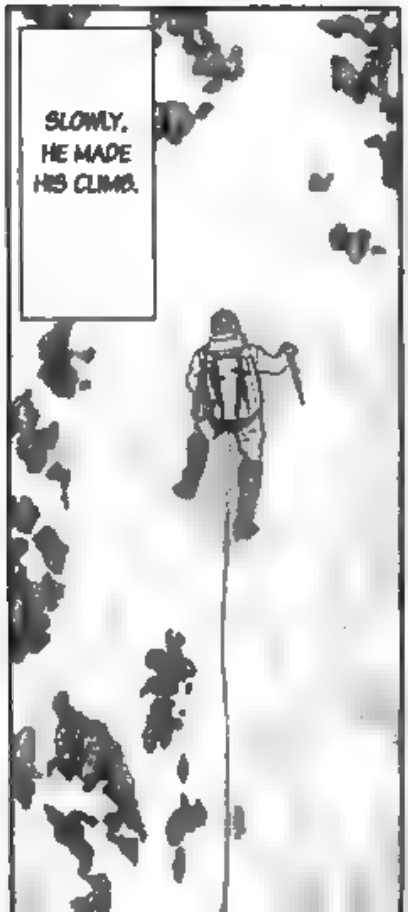
MAYBE I CAN CUT DOWN ON SOME MORE FOOD?
AND, AT LAST...

HE THREW AWAY WHAT FOOD AND FUEL HE JUDGED TO BE IN EXCESS.

DAY FOUR, THE TEMPERATURE, EVEN AT MID-DAY, WAS BETWEEN MINUS TEN AND MINUS TWENTY DEGREES.
BYUUUUUU

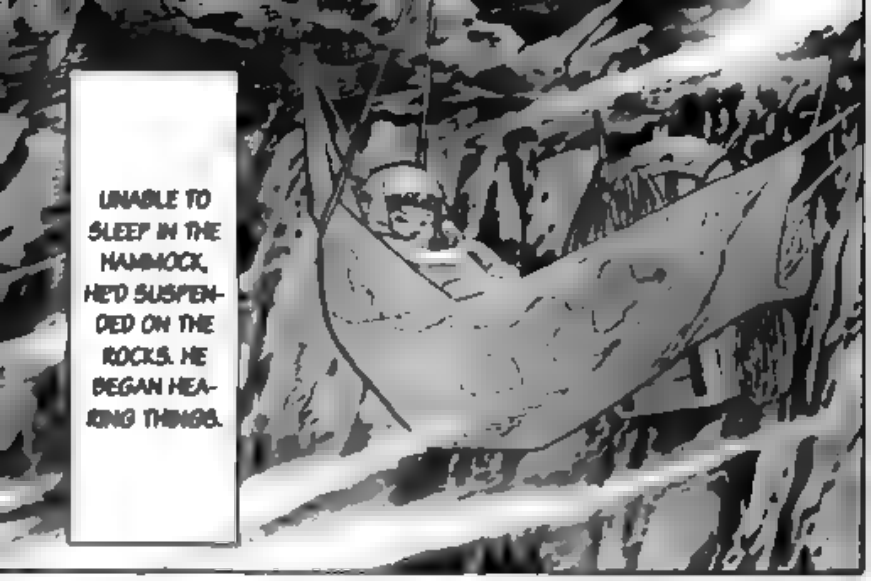
URGHH
HE STRUCK HIS HAMMERING HAND AGAINST THE ROCK FACE, TEARING AND INJURING ONE OF THE FINGERS.

GON
GON
GON


SLOWLY, HE MADE HIS CLIMB.

HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO HAMMER WITH HIS LEFT HAND, BUT HE COULDN'T GET ANY STRENGTH INTO IT.
GRIG

BUT STILL HE HAMMERED.
THE BLEEDING BECAME MORE INTENSE, AND THE SKIN SCRAPED AWAY ALMOST DOWN TO THE BONE.


UNABLE TO SLEEP IN THE HAMMOCK, HE'D SUSPENDED ON THE ROCKS. HE BEGAN HEARING THINGS.

AT NIGHT IT WAS MINUS THIRTY.

BUUUUUU

THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT, THINGS KEPT APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING BEFORE HIM. WHETHER DREAM OR HALLUCINATION, HE COULDN'T SAY.

HE SATED HIMSELF ON POTAGE SOUP WITH DRY RICE GRUEL IN IT FOR A MEAL.

HE TAPED UP HIS INJURED RIGHT HAND.

RAM
RAM

THEN, ON DAY SIX...

ALL RIGHT.
I'M DOING THIS NOW.

CRAC
CRAC

HE WAS BLESSED WITH FINE WEATHER.

WHEN HASE WAS TRYING TO SWITCH HIS ICE AXE FROM HIS INJURED RIGHT HAND TO HIS LEFT.
AH...!
HAH
HAH
UFF
AND FINALLY FOUND THE OPENING TO PASS THROUGH TO THE SUMMIT.
HE CONTINUED HIS ASCENT, WITH THE HELP OF THE LESS EFFICIENT ICE PICK.
GOON
GOON
GOON
AFTER THAT, HE WAS FORCED TO USE HIS SHORT HAMMER.

BUT THERE WAS A SLIGHT LAYER OF ICE, LIKE GLASS, ON THE ROCKS.

OVERCOME THE "CLOUD"
AND FIND THE "GAP TO REACH THE SUMMIT".
FYC

HE SUPPRESSED HIS IMPULSE TO SPEED UP, AND CLIMBED CAUTIOSLY.
GRAC

AFTER TWO HOURS, HE CROSSED THE OPENING.
ZAC

AND EMERGED ONTO THE SNOW-CAPPED SUMMIT.
ZAC
ZAC

HASE WAS NOW THE DARLING OF THE CLIMBING WORLD ACROSS THE GLOBE
MARCH 9, 1978... FOLLOWING HIS ASCENT OF THE MATTERHORN, TSUNEO HASE COMPLETED THE WORLD'S FIRST SOLO CLIMB OF THE EIGER NORTH FACE

FLASH
FLASH
MISTER HASE, CONGRATULATIONS.
SO NOW, YOU MUST FINALLY HAVE YOUR NEXT TARGET IN SIGHT, CORRECT?
THE GRANDES JORASSES IS THE ONLY ONE LEFT, SO...
WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

AND NEXT YEAR THE GRANDES JORASSES/ WALKER SPUR.
TO ACCOMPLISH THE THREE MAJOR NORTH WALLS AS A SINGLE PERSON ON SOLO CLIMBS IN WINTER.
WOULD BE AN UNPARALLELED FEAT IN THE HISTORY OF THE MOUNTAIN CLIMBING WORLDWIDE, I WOULD IMAGINE.

SINCE I'VE COME THIS FAR, I CAN'T DO ANYTHING BUT ATTEMPT IT!
YES, OF COURSE!

YOU DID THE MATTERHORN LAST YEAR...
THE EIGER THIS...

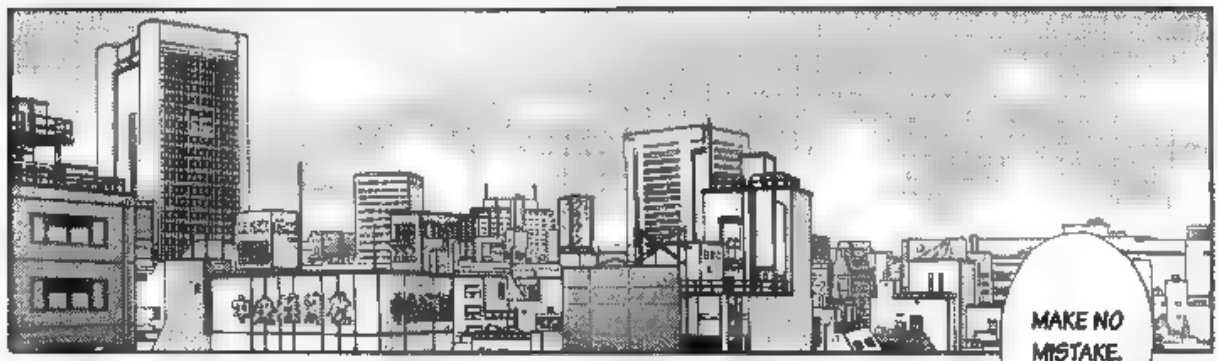
THE UNEXPECTED ROUTES REMAINING TO CONQUER ARE ALL WALLS OF HUGE DIFFICULTY AND DANGEROUSNESS.
IT'S BEEN DIFFICULT FOR US JAPANESE CLIMBERS WHO CAME TO THE EUROPEAN ALPS QUITE LATE HISTORICALLY.
IF I'M ABLE TO SUCCEED IN THIS, FINALLY THE NAME OF A JAPANESE CLIMBER WILL BE WRITTEN INTO THE GLOBAL HISTORY OF MOUNTAINEERING, WON'T IT?
EXACTLY.
THE ACT OF CLIMBING THIS WALL WOULD SIMPLY CLOSE THE LAST PAGE ON THE HISTORY OF THE MOUNTAINEERING IN THE EUROPEAN ALPS, WOULDN'T IT?
IT CAN BE SAID THAT THE WALKER SPUR OF THE GRANDES JORASSES IS THE LAST STILL GREAT WALL OF THE EUROPEAN ALPS.
YOU BE IT IS!
OF COURSE!
CLIC
FLASH
IS IT POSSIBLE?
I WOULD BEG YOU ALL FOR YOUR SUPPORT, PLEASE.
FLASH
I WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE MY NAME ON THAT HISTORICAL PAGE.
IF POSSIBLE...

THE WALKER SPUR ON GRANDES JORASSES IS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT WALLS IN THE EUROPEAN ALPS

IN WINTER, THE TEMPERATURE DROPPED TO BETWEEN MINUS TWENTY AND MINUS THIRTY DEGREES

THE WINDOWS AND THE SNOW STORMS LASHES PEOPLE WHO DARES TO CLIMB IT.

"THE WALL THAT EATS PEOPLE" – THAT WAS THE GRANDES JORASSES'S NORTH FACE


MAKE NO MISTAKE.

WAS THAT THE LEVEL OF DANGER OF THE CLIMB WAS SUBSTANTIALLY HIGH, SO THEY COULDN'T BRING THEMSELVES TO DO IT.
BUT, THE REAL ISSUE.

THERE WERE PLENTY OF CLIMBERS, NOT JUST HASE, WHO SET THEIR SIGHTS ON THAT WALL.

SO THERe WAS NO HELPING IT IF HASE WAS GOING TO BE FIRST.

YOU MIGHT THINK "WELL, IF HASE'S GOING TO ATTEMPT IT...
THEN I'LL DO IT FIRST". BUT IN REALITY YOU COULDN'T ACTUALLY PULL IT OFF.

...
IT WASN'T JUST JAPAN. I IMAGINE MOUNTAINEERS AROUND THE WORLD MUST HAVE BEEN THINKING LIKE THAT.
I'M SURE...

IT WAS HIM.
YES, YOU GOT IT.

BUT..
THERE WAS JUST ONE MAN WHO COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT.
AND THAT...
WAS JOUJI HABU, RIGHT?

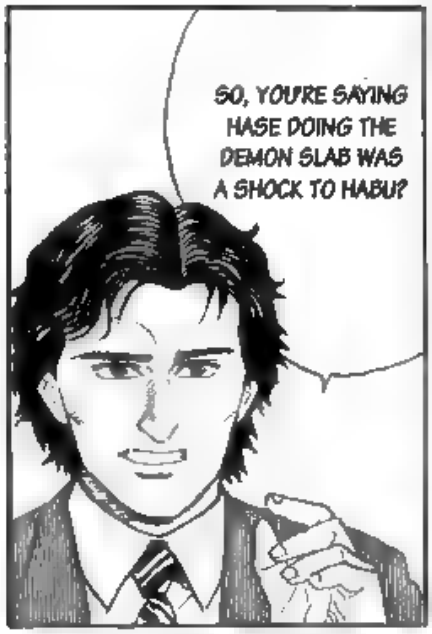
BUT WHY WAS HABU THAT ACTIVELY CONSCIOUS ABOUT HASE'S ACTIVIES?

IT WAS THE YEAR HE STARTED ON THE THREE GREAT NORTH FACES, WASN'T IT?
HE CLIMBED THE DEMON SLAB USING HABU'S SOURTE.

YOU'RE AWARE OF THE STORY OF HASE SCALING THE DEMON SLAB, AREN'T YOU?
YES, I KNOW IT.

BECAUSE OF THE DEMON SLAB.

THE DEMON SLAB?


SO, YOU'RE SAYING HASE DOING THE DEMON SLAB WAS A SHOCK TO HABU?

HE DID IT AS PRACTICE FOR THE WINTER SOLO,
IN RETROS-PECT...
EXACTLY.
...
TAC

DID HE REALLY DO THAT?
WHAT?
THAT BEFORE HASE DID THAT DEMON SLAB, HE CONSULTED WITH HABU ABOUT IT?
DID YOU KNOW...

SLUP
YES.

NO...
MORE PRECI-SELY, IT WAS THE JANUARY OF THAT SAME WINTER.

RIGHT AFTER THE INCIDENTE ON THE CLIFF
LET'S SEE... IT WAS THE YEAR...
WHEN WAS THAT?

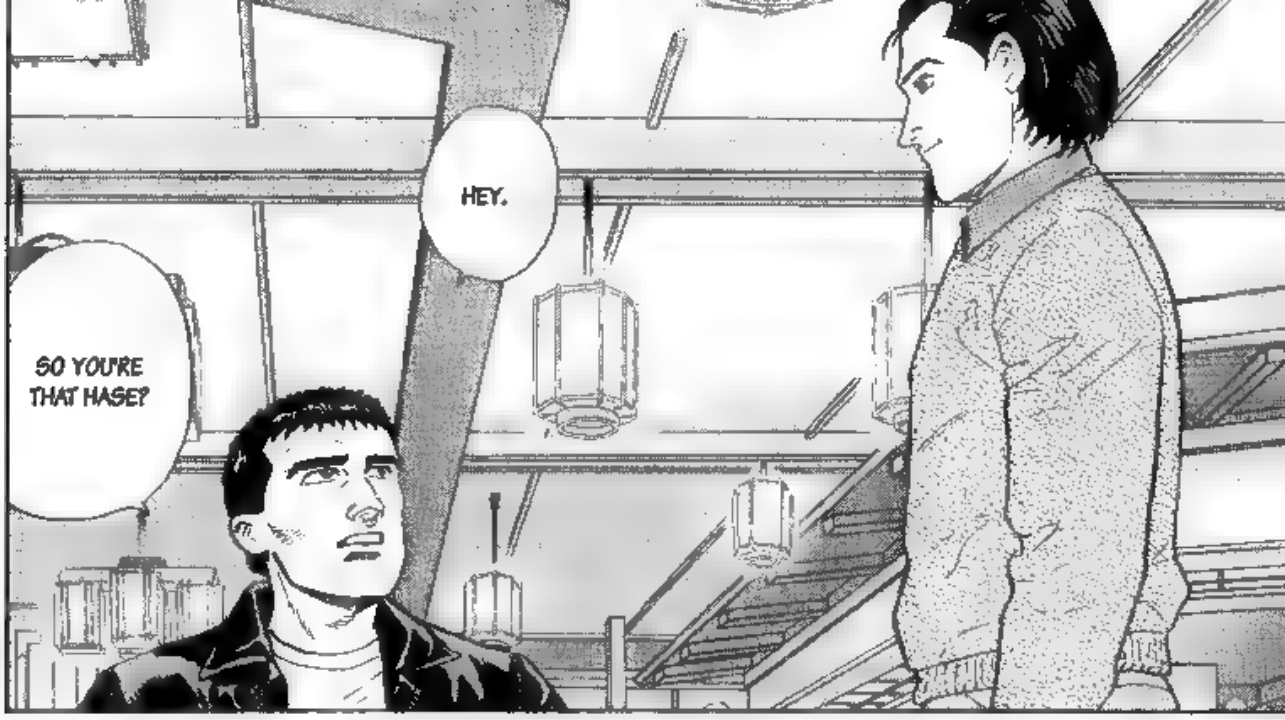
I THINK IT'LL BE A TEST OF OUR NEW MODEL OF CLIMBING BOOTS.

THINGS LIKE THE HARDNESS OF THE SOLE...
AND FOR SELECTING MATERIALS FOR THE INNER LININGS.

IT HAPPENED AFTER IT HAD BEEN SETTLED THAT HABU WOULD ACT AS A TESTER FOR "GRANDES JORASSES" AND, ALONG WITH TADA, THE PAIR HAD GONE OUT FOR DRINKS AT A BAR IN SHIBUYA

I BEG YOUR PARDON, BUT...
AREN'T YOU MISTER HABU?
...

JOUJI HABU AND TSUNEO HASE... IT WAS THE MEE-TING OF THE TWO CLIMBING GENIUSES


HEY.
SO YOU'RE THAT HASE?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
YES!

I HEARD TELL OF YOUR EXPLOITS ON EVEREST TOO, IN... WAS IT 1970?
OH, IT'S YOU!
THE HASE THAT CLIMBED THE TAKIZAWA GULLY ALONE, RIGHT?

WHAT DO YOU SAY?
WON'T YOU JOIN US?
HASE'S CARE-FREE GRIN BROUGHT A SMILE TO HABU'S LIPS TOO, A MAN WHO RARELY SMILED.

HASE WAS A MAN WITH A WARMTH ABOUT HIM MORE LIKE RAYS OF SUNLIGHT THAN BODY HEAT.
MAY I?
WELL, IF I MAY BE SO BOLD.
PLEASE, PLEASE!
RIGHT OVER HERE!
AFTER THE THREE HAD PROPERLY REINTRODUCED THEMSELVES, THEY BEGAN TO TALK.
THE DEMON SLAB?
I'D REALLY LOVE TO HEAR YOUR STORIES ABOUT THE DEMONS SLAB.
ACTUALLY...
WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK TO WIND UP MEETING YOU HERE LIKE THIS, MISTER HABU!
WOW, REALLY...
...
THERE AREN'T EVEN THAT MANY LIKE IT IN THE EUROPEAN ALPS.
THERE ARE NO OTHER WALLS LIKE THAT IN JAPAN.
YES.

I FIGURED IT WAS WAY OUT OF MY LEAGUE!
IT WAS INCREDIBLE!
...
I KIND OF TOOK A LOOK AT THE DEMON SLAB, AND IT WAS REALLY BONE-CHILLING.
AFTER I DID THE TAKIZAWA SULLY IN 1970,
NO...
IT'S JUST... MY LUCK WAS GOOD.
I WONDERED, WHAT KIND OF PERSON WAS THIS HABU GUY TO SCALE SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
GLUP
NOT SURPRISINGLY, I THINK THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WAS THE WEATHER.
WELL...
I SEE.
AH, I SEE.
SO... HOW WAS IT? THE WALL OF THE DEMONS SLAB?
I WAS BLESSED WITH ALL THE RIGHT CONDITIONS ON THAT CLIMB.

WHICH AREA DID YOU STE UP YOU BIVOUAC, MISTER HABU?
AT THE TIME I HAD TO AVOID AVALANCHES....
SO I SET UP THE BIVOUAC UNDER AN OVERHANG ON A THIRTY METER ICE WALL ON F-I.
RIGHT!
HOW DO YOU SCALE HE ROCKS WITHOUT GETTING PERPLEXED?
ALSO, HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU READ THE ROUTE?

ON GUILLIES WHERE THERE'S A DANGER OF AVALANCHES, THE CLIMB BECOMES ONE THAT DEMANDS SPEED.
I SEE.
BUT I ENDURED IT.
YOU'RE CONSTALTY SHOWERED BY FALLING SICK WHILE CLIMBING.

EACH TIME HASE ASKED, HABU ANSWERED.
IT WAS TOO DANGEROUS TO CLIMB THE HANG BELT DIRECTLY.
SO, HOW DID YOU HANDLE THE ICE CASCADE ON F4 – FOR YOU, THE ONE DIFFICULT SPOT?
I GOT IT!

IF YOU'RE SLOPPY, THERE'S A BIG CHANCE YOU COULD GET BURIED IN AN AVALANCHE.
ASTONISHINGLY, HABU REMEMBERED EVERY SINGLE HAND AND FOOT MOVEMENT HEM ADE ON THE DEMON SLAB, FROM THE STARTING POINT TO THE END OF THE CLIMB.
AFTET TRAVERSING THE F4 OVERHANG, IT'S A SURE THING YOU'LL MAKE IT THROUGH TO THE UPPER RIGHT AREA.

ONCE YOU GET OVER THE TOP OF THE OVERHANG, IF YOU CLIMB RIGHT.
HABU EVEN DEMONSTRATED HIS OWN MOVEMENTS ON THE CLIMB RIGHT THERE.
YOU'LL FIND A CONTINUOUS ICE WALL OF ABOUT FIFTY METERS ABOVE.

I STRETHCED AS HIGH AS I COULD TO THE RIGHT EDGE OF THE OVERHANG.
I FOUND A HOLD THERE OF ABOUT FIVE MILIMETERS.

WELL, THANK YOU VERY MUCH, TRULY!
I'LL TAKE ALL OF THIS INTO CONSIDERATION.

DID YOU FEEL IT LOOKED MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE SLAB ITSELF?
WHAT ABOUT... THE LAST ICE WALL, AFTER YOU CROSS F6?

OH, REALLY?
BUT I THINK IF YOU CAN ENDURE THE FALLING SNOW THERE, YOU CAN MAKE IT.
YES!

NO ONE HAD SUCCEEDED IN WINTER SINCE HABU AND INOUE FIRST DID THE DEMON SLAB IN 1970.
YES, I'LL BE ENTERING TANIGAWA TOMORROW.

YES!
YOU'RE GOING TO THE DEMON SLAB?

WHAT?

TOMMOR-ROW.

AREN'T YOU THE LEAST AFRAID?
THAT'S WHAT TADA WAS THINKING AT THE TIME.
YES, I'M QUITE AFRAID OF IT!

DIDN'T THIS MAN FEEL ANY UNEASE AT ALL?

I ONLY GO TO SCARY PLACES BECAUSE THEY'RE SCARY!
HA, HA, HA.
IT SEEMS LIKE...

HEH HEH... WHY IS IT...?

I'M GOING ALONE.

OH...
WHO IS IT?
WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARTNER?

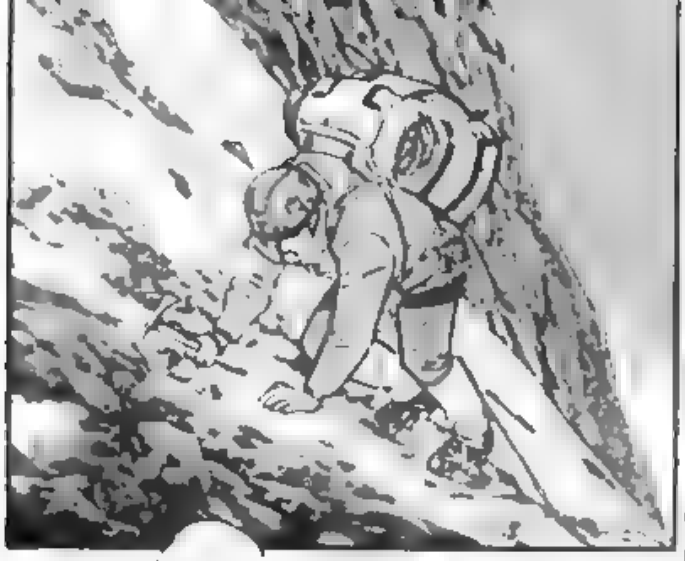
I CLIMB ALONE.
ALWAYS.
THE DEMON SLAB IN WINTER, HAD PRODUCES SO MANY DEAD BODIES IN THE PAST THAT PEOPLE STOPPED THINKING ABOUT THE CLIMB

ALONE?

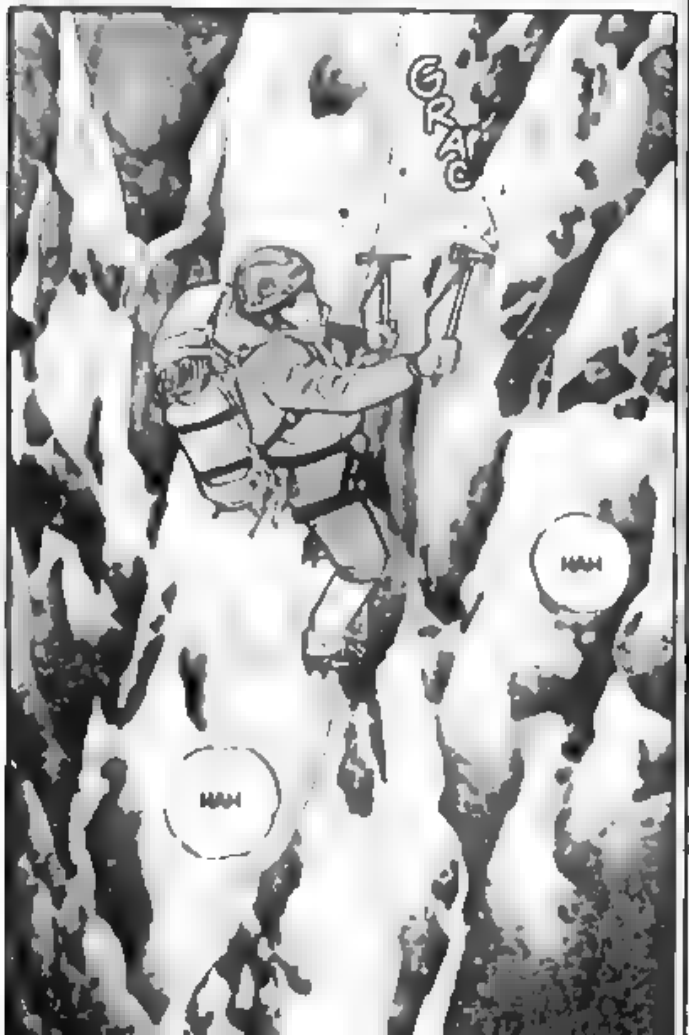
YES.

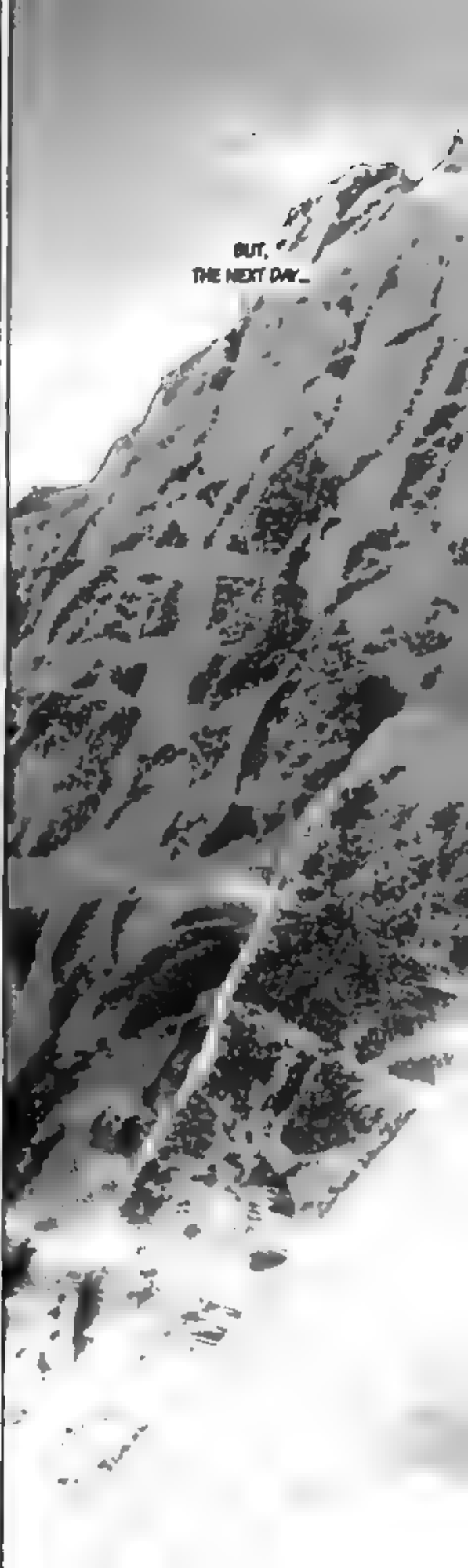
SURE.
THANK YOU KINDLY.
WELL THEN, MISTER HABU,

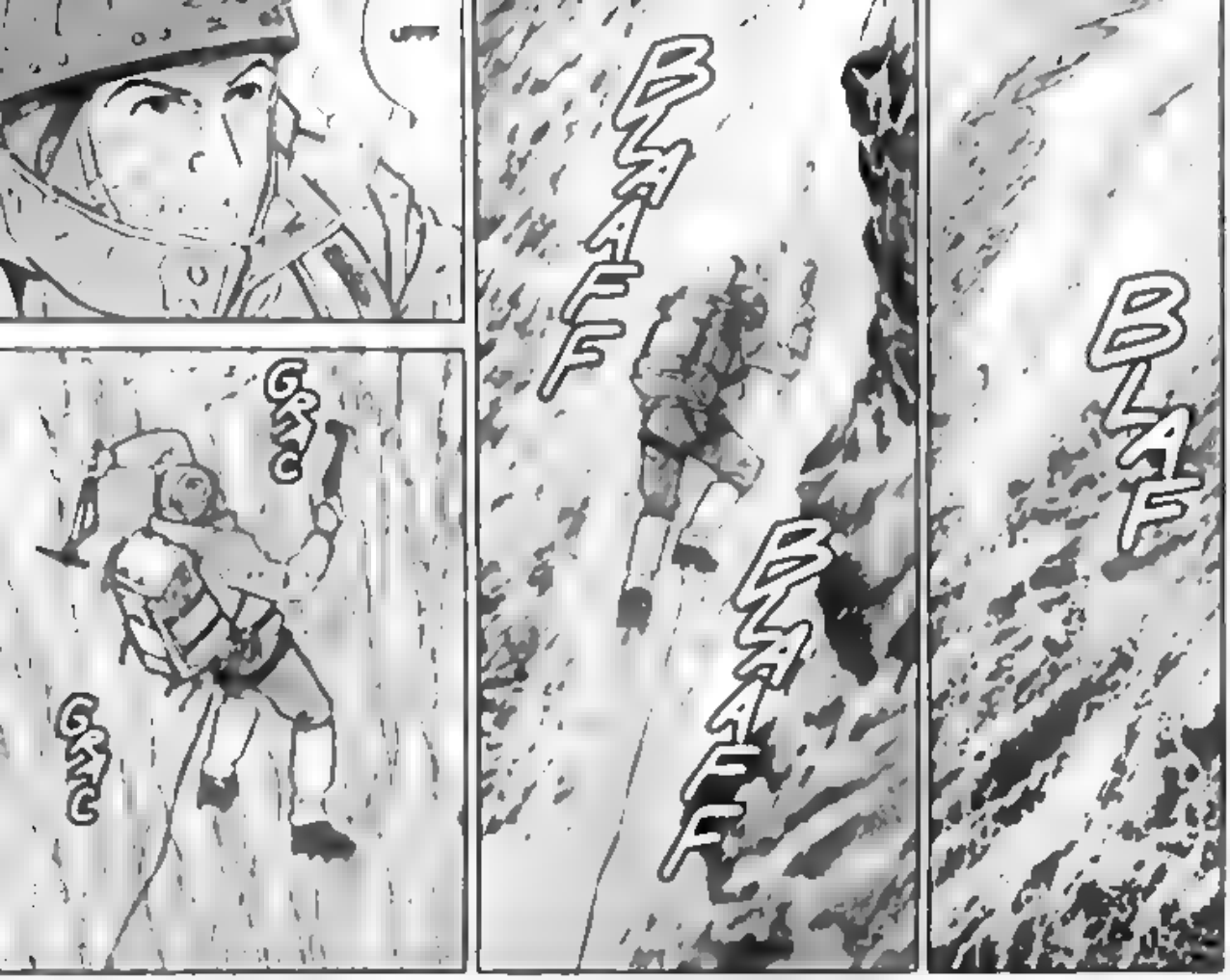
TSUNEO HASE STANDING THERE DID NOT LOOK LIKE A MAN WHO WAS ABOUT TO ATTEMPT A PERILOUS ASCENT THE NEXT DAY



HAH
HAH


GRAG
HAH
HAH

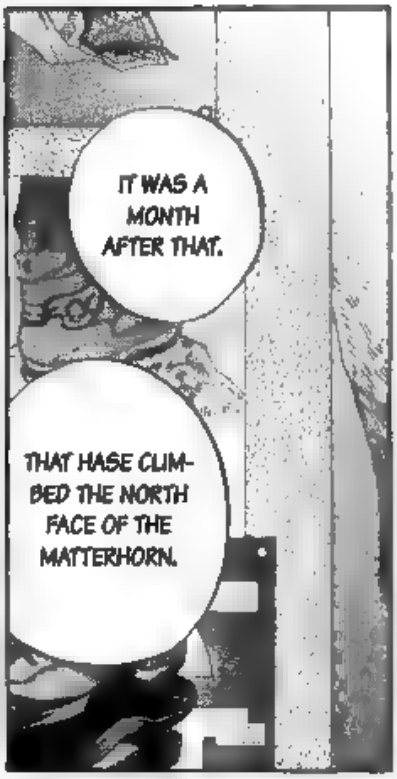

BUT,
THE NEXT DAY...

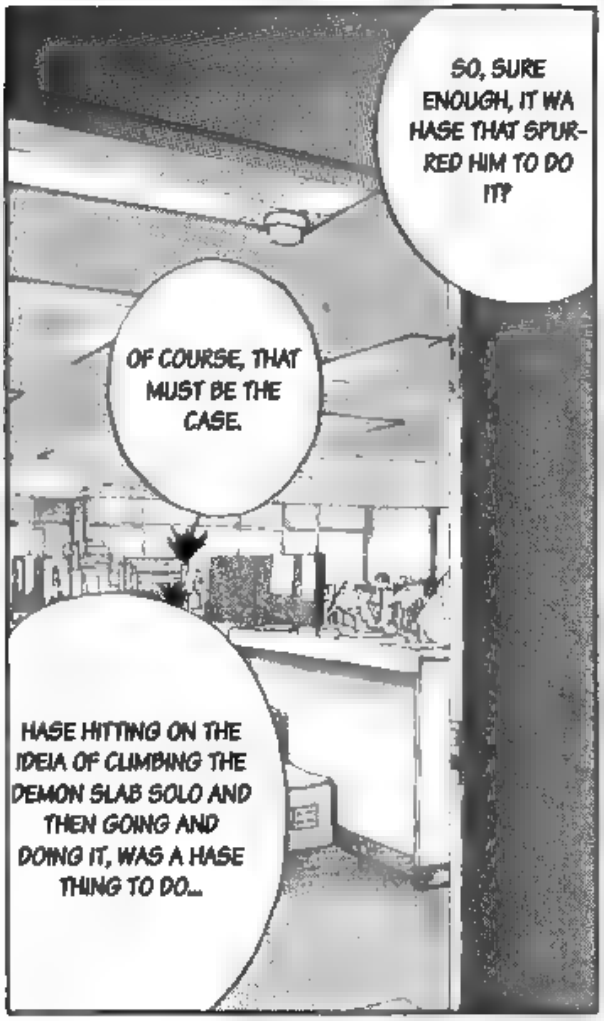

GRIC
GRIC
BLAFF
BLAFF
BLAF

HASE
SCALED THE DEMON
SLAB SOLO

I THINK THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A REAL SHOCK TO HABU, SEE?

TO HASE...
THE DEMON SLAB WAS MERELY A PRELUDE BEFORE TAKING ON THE MATTERHORN.
...


IT WAS A MONTH AFTER THAT.
THAT HASE CLIMBED THE NORTH FACE OF THE MATTERHORN.


SO, SURE ENOUGH, IT WA HASE THAT SPURRED HIM TO DO IT?
OF COURSE, THAT MUST BE THE CASE.
HASE HITTING ON THE IDEIA OF CLIMBING THE DEMON SLAB SOLO AND THEN GOING AND DOING IT, WAS A HASE THING TO DO...

AFTERWARDS, FOLLOWING HASE, IN FEBRUARY HABU DID HIS SECOND CLIMB OF THE DEMON SLAB, RIGHT?

YES.
THIS TIME ON HIS OWN.
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.

IN THE END, THE DEMON SLAB HAS BEEN CLIMBED IN WINTER THREE TIMES.
AND, THE ONLY THREE PEOPLE WHO'VE CLIMBED IT ARE HABU, INOUE AND HASE.

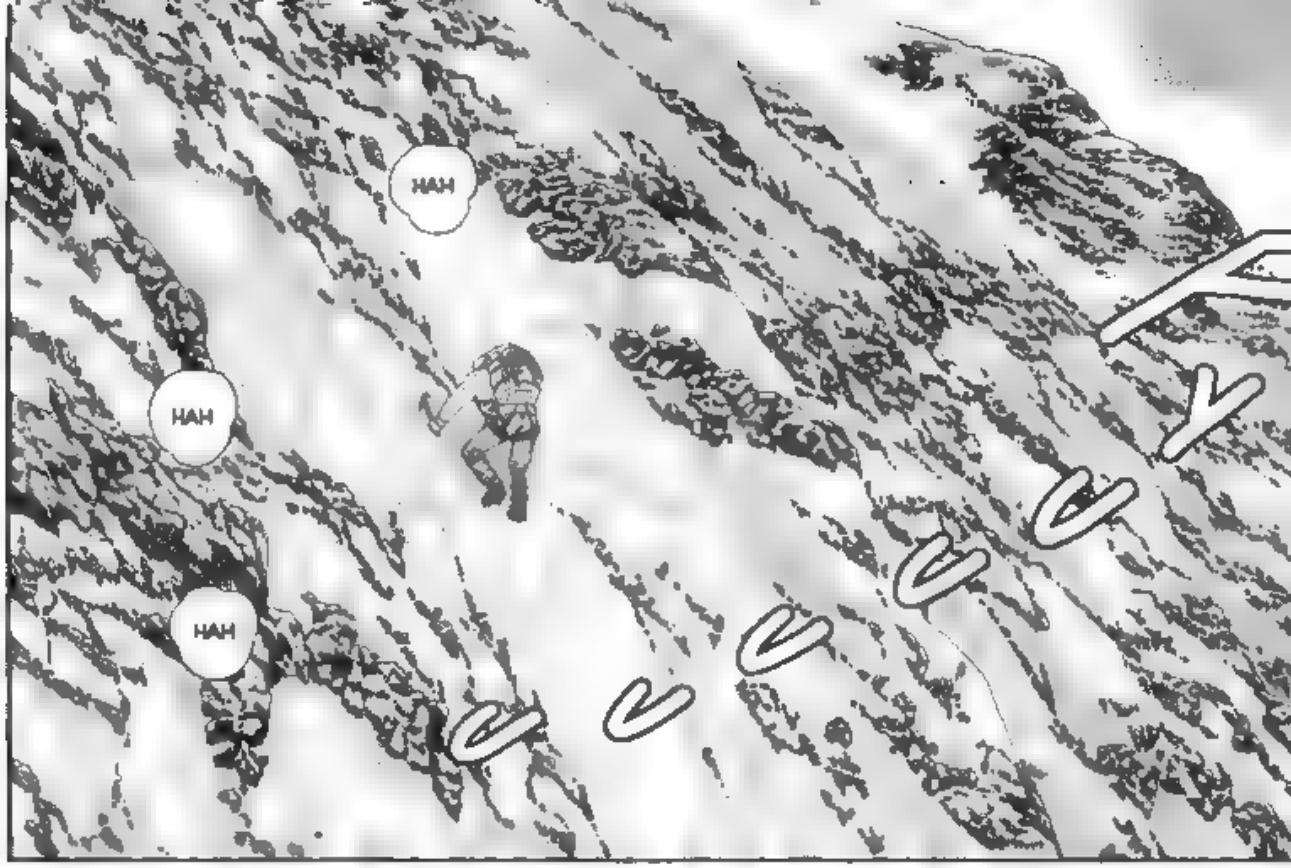
THIS TIME SOLO, WAS A HABU THING TO DO.
AND HABU TACKLING THE DEMON SLAB A SECOND TIME...

IS THAT SO...

...
THE ONLY ONE WHO'S CLIMBED IT TWICE IS HABU – THAT'S STILL UNCHANGED TO THIS DAY.

Byuuu

THE DEMON SLAB IN WINTER...


HAH
HAH
HAH

WAS THE DEMON SLAB IN WINTER

HIS SINGLE - HIS GREATEST DECORATION...
GRACC

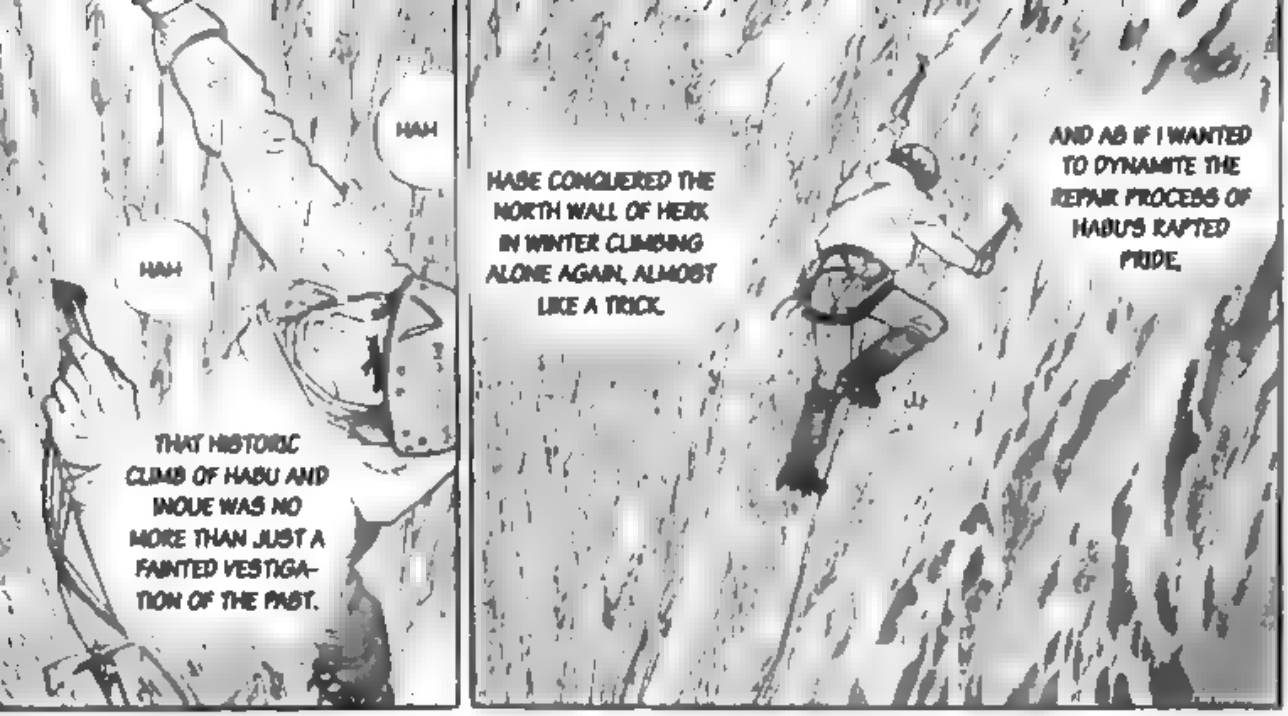
TO JOUJI HABU...

"I'M THE ONE THAT DID THE DEMON SLAB IN WINTER!"
BLA BLA BLA BLA BLAF
WHATEVER TYPE OF PERSON, WHOEVER MOUNTAINS OVERSEAS...
WHATEVER ACCOMPLISHMENTS THEY

HABE HAD ROBBED HIM OF THAT STRON-
FLIF
FLIF
THAT WAS THE STRONGHOLD IN HABU'S HEART

IT SET HABU'S TEET GRINDING TO ENDURE ITONE MONTH AFTER HABE CONQUERED THE DEMON SLAB
HABE HAD PULLED OFF THE DEMON SLAB IN WINTER ON HIS OWN, AND ALMOST NONCHALANTLY.
FYU U U

HABU SCALED THE DEMON SLAB AS WELL
GR
CA
A MONTH AFTER HASE FINISHED THE ASCENT TO THE DEMONS SLAB
B
HABU TOLD HIMSELF
"I CAN BEAT HASE ON TIME"
AND WHERE HASE HAD SET UP THREE BIVOUACS, HABU ONLY SET UP TWO
THAT HASE'S SOLO CLIMB OF THE DEMONS SLAB IN WINTER HAD BEEN THE FIRST WAS AN UNMOVABLE FACTAND THEN... AS IF IN MOCKERY OF HABU'S HEARFELT WORK...


HAH
HAH
THAT HISTORIC CLIMB OF HABU AND INOUE WAS NO MORE THAN JUST A FAINTED VESTIGA-TION OF THE PAST.
HABE CONQUERED THE NORTH WALL OF HEIX IN WINTER CLIMBING ALONE AGAIN, ALMOST LIKE A TRICK.
AND AS IF I WANTED TO DYNAMITE THE REPAIR PROCESS OF HABU'S RAPTED PRIDE.

SURELY...

THAT JOUJI HABU BEGAN TO REALLY OBSESS ABOUT THE OTHER CLIMBING GENIUS, TSUNEO HABE
IT WAS AT THIS MOMENT...

WHAT?
UMM... COULD I GET MOST OF FEBRUARY AND MARCH OFF?
ARE YOU GOING CLIMBING SOMEWHERE?

MID-JANUARY 1979

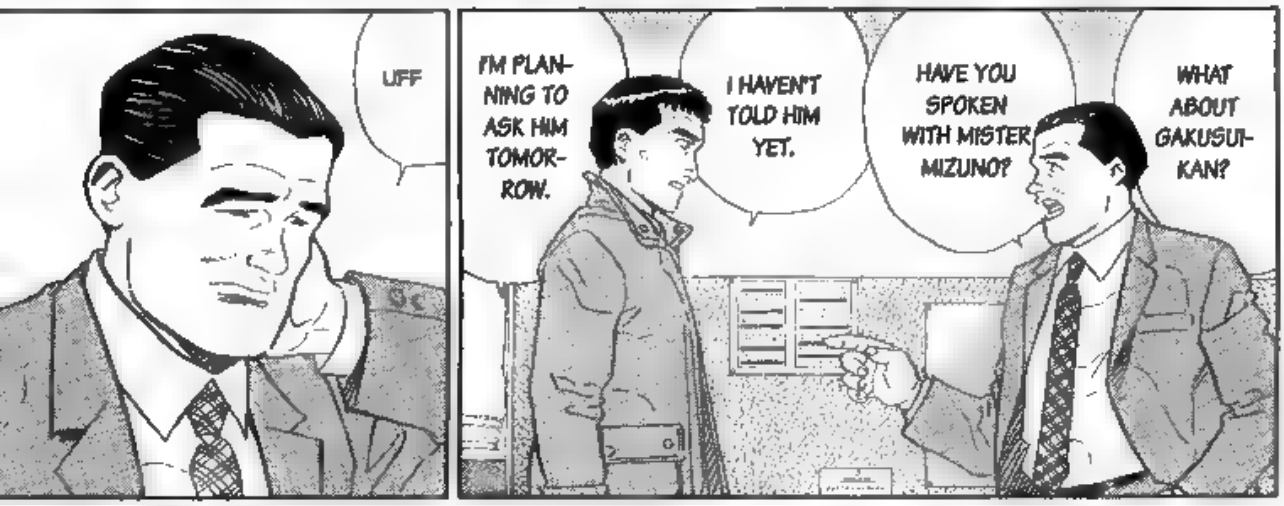
HABU APPROACHED TADA FOR TIME OFF.
YES.
THAT'S IT.

YOU'RE...
GOING TO PULL IT OFF BEFORE HASE DOES, IS THAT IT?
...

...

YOU'RE GOING TO ATTEMPT THE GRANDES JORASSES, AREN'T YOU?
YOU WOULDN'T!

WE'VE PLANNED FOR A CLIMB IN TANIGAWA.
WE'RE TESTING SOME PROTOTYPES IN MAY.
NO WAY!
GIVE ME THE TIME OFF
PLEASE...


UFF
I'M PLANNING TO ASK HIM TOMORROW.
I HAVEN'T TOLD HIM YET.
HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH MISTER MIZUNO?
WHAT ABOUT GAKUSUIKAN?

HASE IS GOING AND DOING IT ON HIS OWN!
YOU'VE GOT IT WRONG! HABU, WE AREN'T THE ONES THAT PAID TO SEND HASE THERE.
H... HANG ON A SECOND!
...
WHY WON'T YOU LET ME GO?
TADA...
HOW COME THIS COMPANY DISHES OUT MONEY TO PEOPLE OTHER THAN ME AND SENDS THEM TO THE GRANDES JORASSES?

HE'S BEING SPONSORED BY TEM OTHER COMPANIES LIKE OURS.
WE ONLY SUPPLIED HASE WITH A TINY BIT OF MONEY AND GEAR.

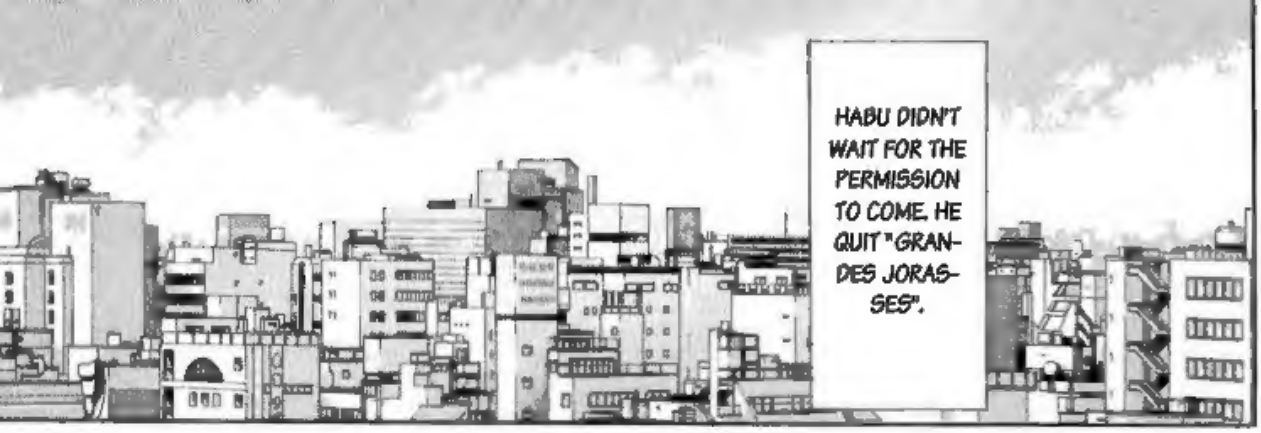
HASE DECIDED TO DO IT HIMSELF.
HE PLANNED IT HIMSELF, AND HE'S GOING HIMSELF.

LISTEN, THE REASON HASE'S ATTRACTED SPONSORS IS BECAUSE OF HIS ACHIEVEMENTS ON EIGER AND THE MATTERHORN.
MOVIE COMPANIES, TV STATIONS, NEWSPAPERS, FOOD MAKERS... ALL KINDS!

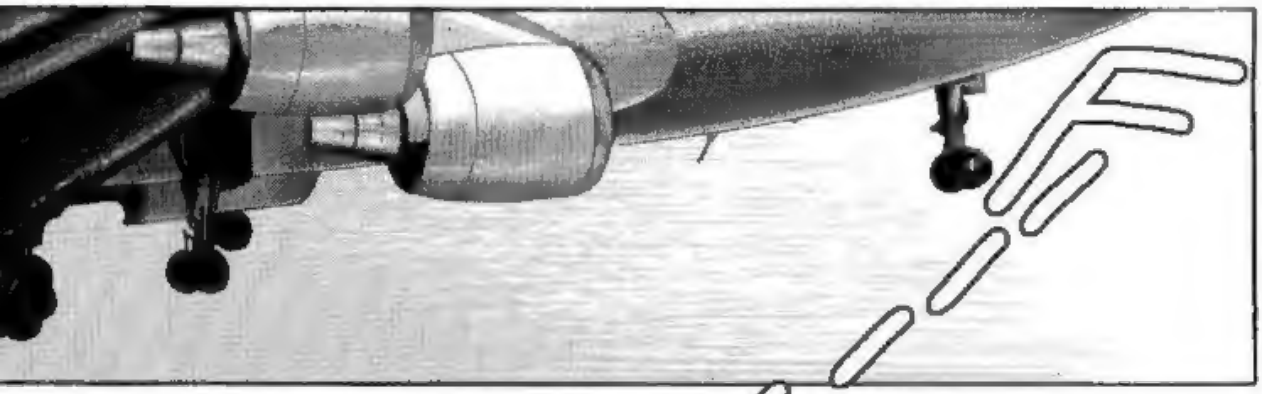
HABU...!

JUST GIVE ME SOME TIME.
FOR NOW, I'LL LOOK INTO GETTING YOU THE TIME OFF.

...
I UNDERSTAND.
EXCUSE ME.


HABU DIDN'T WAIT FOR THE PERMISSION TO COME. HE QUIT "GRANDES JORASSES".

MIZUNO, THE MANAGER OF GAKUSUIKAN, GAVE HIM PERMISSION FOR A MOTH OFF, SO HABU WAS ABLE TO SETTLE THINGS THERE WITHOUT WAITTING.


N-F

HABU LEFT JAPAN – THREE DAYS BEFORE HASE'S SCHEDULED DEPARTURE.
FEBRUARY 1979

FAR BEYOND THE DISTANT SEA OF CLOUDS, JOUJI HABU'S MOST EXTREME CLIMB AWAITED.

IT WAS NA "ESCAPE" CLIMB THAT WOULD LATER BE CALLED MIRACULOUS.

FIIIIIIIIIN